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# THE HOME AFLOAT

OR

THE BOY TRAPPERS

OF

THE HACKENSACK

THOMAS TOWNSEND



ATHENIA PUBLISHING COMPANY

ATHENIA, N. J.

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## INTRODUCTION

The scene of this story is laid in a locality that is familiar to the eye of a large percentage of our people who have had occasion to visit the Metropolis of our country. Several of the largest arteries of travel and commerce (the railroads) leading into the city of New York cross this valley, and what man, woman, boy or girl, has not heard or read of the historical and traditional Indian name "Hackensack"?

These meadows were at one time the best known hunting and fishing grounds adjacent to the large city, and there are still living hundreds of the best citizens who can bear testimony to this fact. All this is changed. The handiwork of man, and the demands of civilization, have caused the surface of this marsh to be bisected with numerous roads. No game bird can now alight upon its waters and remain for any length of time. The noise of a passing train of cars or the screeching of the trolley car wheels scares them, and causes them to find a more secluded and quiet place. The numerous bridges crossing over the lower end or mouth of the river act as a dam, and have destroyed this one time favorite stream of the disciples of Isaac Walton. The muskrat that at one time could be seen perched upon the top of its house has almost become extinct, and is now very seldom seen. He probably recognizes that the bump of destruction in mankind, in so far as it relates to him and his family, has become very highly developed, and while he can occasionally be seen crawling

along the muddy bottom of a creek, he very seldom appears on the surface of the meadow.

A great many of the characters in this story are chosen from real life, while the tale itself is one of fiction. The writer may have slightly overdrawn in his description of incidents and events. If so, he has only taken advantage of the liberty which is allowed in works of this character. It has been the author's aim to impress the youthful reader with the fact that it makes very little difference in this life in what position a young man may find himself, if he will only remain honest, energetic and thoughtful, he will meet with success.

Dedicated to my children.



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## CHAPTER I

### SEARCH FOR A HOME IN THE COUNTRY

"What is your plan, Jim?" This question was asked by a boy about sixteen years of age, of his elder brother, as they were sitting on the porch of a cottage.

Before answering the above question it will be necessary to give the family history of our young heroes. James Hull had returned from the war to find the health of his wife shattered, and himself suffering from wounds and exposure. He concluded that it would be better to find a home in the country, where he hoped the pure air would prolong the life of his dear wife.

So one morning in the spring of 1865, he and his eldest son, James, left the city of New York, and taking the ferry-boat at the foot of Christopher street journeyed to Hoboken. Upon arriving there they stepped aboard a horse-car, hardly knowing where they were going, but confident that the car would carry them beyond the city limits. During their journey they heard a lady ask the conductor to let her off at the "Hackensack Plank Road," and knowing that the town of Hackensack was located about eighteen miles from Hoboken, they concluded that they would get off at the Plank road and walk in the direction of that town.

After riding for about half an hour the conductor called out, "Hackensack Plank Road!" and father and son alighted. They inquired of a man standing on the corner, in which direction they should go to reach the town of Hackensack. The stranger pointed to the north, and they proceeded on their journey.

After walking for about fifteen minutes, they found themselves on the western edge of the Palisades, with the whole valley of the Hackensack before their gaze. It was a beautiful sight to a boy who had never been out of the city of New York, and James, catching his father by the arm, gave a cry of delight. As they stood gazing on the scene, he said, "See, father, that beautiful river running through the center of this valley; look at its tributaries or creeks. Does not this river remind you of a large tree, the creeks being the branches or limbs?"

"Yes, my son," said the father, "it is beautiful; but we must not waste our time here. We will go forward, as we have a long walk before us, and we must try and return to the city to-day, although mother does not expect us before tomorrow night."

At the foot of the Palisades they entered the town of New Durham. As they approached the center of the town they came to a tavern, and as James looked at the sign-board he saw three pigeons perched on top of the board, one in the center and one on each end. On the sign were painted in white letters the words "Three Pigeons Hotel." The hotel and its surrounding out-houses were no doubt built in colonial days. After quenching their thirst at the tavern pump they traveled along, passing farm house after farm house until they reached a town called "English Neighborhood." In this town they came to the first of the creeks or tributaries that feed the river. This brook had a dam across it, thus forcing the water back and forming a pond. The road passed through the center of the pond dividing it into two parts, the two ponds

being connected by a sluice, the top of the sluice forming a bridge for the road. At one end of the dam was a mill with an overshot wheel. It was the first James had ever seen.

Another feature that attracted our hero's attention was a toll-gate which he considered quite a curiosity. A mile outside of this village they came to a tavern called the "Club House," and it being about noon time, —and our travelers being tired as well as hungry, they seated themselves under a tree by the roadside, and the father opened the package that the mother had prepared for them. After eating heartily of the contents of the package, and washing it down with water from the tavern pump, they felt much refreshed, and continued their journey.

They had not proceeded far before they arrived at what they supposed at the time was the Hackensack River, but learned afterwards that it was the largest of the tributaries to the river, and was called "English Creek." This creek was about three hundred yards wide, and a bridge crossed it at the point where our travelers stood. This bridge was known as "Banta's" bridge and was a favorite spot for anglers.

After crossing the creek the road turns and runs due west, and it was on this road, not a mile from the bridge, that our travelers found an unoccupied house. They would probably have passed this house had not the son's quick eye caught sight of a large rat perched on top of a bunch of hay, directly behind the house, and quite close to the creek's bank. James called his father's attention to the rodent. Mr. Hull immediately recognized the animal as being a muskrat or a species

of rat for whose skin there was quite a demand in the fur trade of New York City. He decided that these rats must be plentiful in this vicinity, and he therefore concluded to watch this one for a few minutes. To do this, unobserved by the rat, it was necessary to get the house between them and the rat.

They proceeded toward the house and upon finding the door partly open, entered, passing through the front room into the kitchen in the rear. There they found a window from which they could easily watch the movements of the rat. It also brought them within twenty or thirty feet of him, and they soon saw that what they supposed to be a bunch of hay, was nothing more nor less than a muskrat house built of hay, sticks and mud. They also found out that the gentleman on top had plenty of company. This was made apparent by the numerous heads that were continually bobbing in and out of the many openings in the sides of this queer looking edifice.

Mr. Hull turned his attention to the house, and said: "How would you like to live here, my son?"

"Oh, father!" said James, "it would just suit me, and I know that mother, Frank and Sadie would like it. It would be so much better than being cooped up in a house in the city."

"Yes, my son," replied Mr. Hull, "but you and Frank will not have the advantages or the opportunities to get along in the world that you would have in the city. Neither will I be able to get employment as readily out here. You know, my boy, that we only have a few hundred dollars left of the money I received from the government, and we must make it go as far as we can,

for by so doing we will be able to buy mother many little dainties that nothing but money can obtain." As this reference was made to the illness of the mother, both father and son's eyes were filled with tears.

"I will tell you, my boy, what I have been thinking about since we entered this house. I thought that you and Frank could help us by trapping and catching a number of those rats that we were looking at a few minutes ago. There must also be plenty of fish in these waters, and you know that there is always a good demand for fresh fish in the city."

"Yes, father," said James, "we could no doubt sell all the fish that we could catch, but what would we do with the rats after we had caught them?" Mr. Hull then explained to James how they could sell the skins of these animals in the city. He said that he did not know what they were worth but they could find out when they returned to the city.

They proceeded to examine the interior of the house. It was a two story frame building. On the first floor there was one large room and a small hallway. A small extension had also been built to the main building in the rear for a kitchen. The second story was divided into two bed rooms. A good size attic was formed by the structure being covered with a peaked roof. The house looked as if it had been unoccupied for a long time as it was sadly in need of repairs. The plastered walls were, however, in good condition, and Mr. Hull being a carpenter by trade said that he could soon make the house comfortable. He considered that its being in such bad condition, was in his favor, for he would be able to secure it at a very

low rental. There was a fence enclosing about one acre of ground, which looked as if it had at one time been cultivated. A fine spring of clear, cold water bubbled out from the side of the road not many rods from the house.

It being quite late in the afternoon Mr. Hull said that they would be unable to return to the city that day and that they would spend the balance of the afternoon in looking for the owner of the house. They therefore returned to the tavern or "Club House," and after making arrangements for remaining over night, Mr. Hull inquired of the proprietor, if he knew the owner of the house. He said that he did, and the house was owned by a very rich man by the name of Knapp, who resided in a large house on the Englewood road. (This road joined the Plank road at the "Club House") and he said that if Mr. Hull would step back of the tavern he would point out the house to him.

After the proprietor had pointed out the house, Mr. Hull lost no time, but immediately started to call on Mr. Knapp. They soon arrived at the mansion. A ring of the bell was answered by a maid who asked them their business. Mr. Hull informed her that he wished to see Mr. Knapp and asked her if the gentleman was at home. Mr. Knapp was at home, and the business of renting the house was soon closed by Mr. Knapp agreeing to let them have the house free of rent to the first of May, and after that the rental was to be five dollars per month. A month's rent was paid in advance so as to secure the bargain, and upon receiving a receipt for the same, they returned to the hotel.

It was now quite dark, and as supper at the hotel



was ready they ate heartily of the repast that was set before them. The whole day had been one of strange experience for James who had never been away from home over night, but as they were very tired they went to bed early. They slept soundly, and when called the following morning for breakfast, James found that he was quite sore from their long tramp the day before. After they had eaten, and Mr. Hull had settled his bill with the proprietor, they started on their journey homeward, where they arrived about eleven o'clock.

We will not weary our readers with the details of moving; suffice it to say that Mrs. Hull was perfectly satisfied with the arrangement, and after Mr. Hull had made the necessary repairs to the house, the whole family (which consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Hull, and their three children, James, nineteen years of age; Sadie, a girl of seventeen, and Frank, the youngest, a boy of fifteen) became duly installed in their new home.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BOY TRAPPERS START THEIR TRAPS

One morning, about a week after the Hulls had become established in their new home, Mr. Hull told the boys that it was time to commence making the garden, and as he intended to go to the city that day he would purchase the necessary tools and seeds. He also told them that he was going to buy traps, nets and fishing tackle.

The boys were very glad to hear this, as they both were very anxious to get to work and earn money. The following day an express wagon, that made two trips a week between Hackensack and New York, drew up in front of the house, and unloaded quite a number of bundles and packages. These the boys proceeded to carry into the house.

The day after both boys were set to work digging up the garden. It was hard work but they went at it manfully and by twelve o'clock they had spaded over the space that their father had marked out for them.

Mr. Hull had gone to Hoboken to purchase a load of lumber with which to build an out-house and a row-boat. He had also heard that there was considerable money to be made by gathering the coarse meadow hay, which grew on the unclaimed lands four or five miles down the river. He now proposed to buy lumber enough to build a large scow, so as to be able to get the hay from the meadow by loading the scow and then floating the load up to his house. He visited these unclaimed lands during the week with a neighbor and found the grass growing on them to be of a much better

and finer quality than the grass that grew on the meadows nearer his home.

He was very much surprised to find, upon his return home with the load of lumber, that the boys had completed their task. He now decided that he would help them finish the garden, which would take four or five days steady work. He wanted them to get accustomed to using the hammer, saw and carpenter's tools. He intended that they should build the out-house. That evening he drew a plan of the house, James and Frank watching every stroke of the pencil, and asking the meaning of every line and mark. When the plan was finished James declared he could build the shanty.

The garden was at last planted, and the day for commencing the out-house had arrived. That evening they had a call from their landlord, Mr. Knapp. He had heard, he said, that Mr. Hull was a pretty good mechanic, and he wanted to know if he could secure his services for a few days. The landlord inspected the work that Mr. Hull had done in the house, and pronounced it first class, and said that he would like to have him come to his house the following day prepared to go to work. This the father promised to do, for he was glad to get the chance to earn a few dollars, although he was far from being a well man. This was owing to the wound he had received in his side during the war. He could not lift any great weight. This trouble he explained to Mr. Knapp the following day, who replied that as he had not gone to the war he guessed that Mr. Hull had done fighting enough for them both, and he did not want him to strain at lifting,

but to let the other men do that, as he intended to give him complete charge of the work.

The boys had been in their new home about four weeks, but so busy had they been with the garden, and in building the out-house, that they had been unable to try their traps or to do any fishing. They had, however, succeeded in killing two muskrats that made their appearance in the garden. These they had taken to an old darkey, who lived about half a mile up the road, and he had shown them how to skin the rats without injuring the fur. This darkey went by the name of "Old Harry," and the boys had become acquainted with him through his having stopped to talk to them as they were working in the garden. Every old resident of Bergen county seemed to know him, and he seemed to know every one in Bergen county. He was found to be honest and truthful but like most of his race not over-fond of work. He had no use for the town butchers, for he would declare that "possum and snapping turtle meat was de sweetest and best meat in de world." He was the best fisherman in the neighborhood, and he was better acquainted with the creeks and river than any one else.

Old Harry prided himself upon being somewhat of a philosopher. One day upon seeing Frank walking along with both his hands rammed deep down in his pockets he said to him:

"My son, you must always keep one hand free and ready for use, if you should trip and fall with boaf of your hands in your pockets, you would hurt your face, but if one hand is free, and ready for use, you would put it out in front of you and fall on your hand."

He was always jolly, good natured, and was never heard to use profane language. Mrs. Hull noticed that he passed the house four times regularly every Sunday. She concluded that the old darky was a Christian and attended the "Old Dutch Reformed Church" and Sunday-school. (This church is located between "Banta's" bridge and the "Club House.")

One morning as he was talking to the boys, she called to him and asked if he would stop for her boys the following Sunday. The old darkey took off his hat, and bowing so low that his head almost touched the ground, replied:

"For sure Ise will, such an honor and service Ise glad to perform."

Mrs. Hull thanked him and bidding him good-day entered the house.

From this time on Old Harry seemed to think that these two boys were under his special charge, and when he was not busy fishing could always be found in their company. Harry turned to the boys and telling them to be sure and be ready by two o'clock, sharp, Sunday afternoon, he walked away. The following Sunday he found the two boys ready waiting for him and they walked to the church together. As they approached the church he saw the pastor standing in front of the door, and taking both boys by the hand he walked up to him and said:

"Ise brung you two new scholars to-day, Massa Taylor; Ise know dat day is good boys, for Ise has had my eye on dem for de past free or four weeks."

The minister thanked him, and said that he was glad to see him take such an interest in the Sunday-school,

and then turning to the boys he bid them welcome. He then conducted them to the church, and introduced them to a gentleman who was to be their teacher.

Mr. Hull had been steadily employed by Mr. Knapp and had not been able to devote much time to boat building. He had succeeded in finishing the rowboat. This he had accomplished by working evenings with the help of the boys. The task of naming the boat was given to James, who promptly replied that the boat should be named "Sadie." Mr. Van Broughten, the expressman, had brought up from the city two pair of oars and rowlocks. When they were placed in the boat she was ready for launching.

The following day at high tide the boat was put into the water, and after the boys had pronounced her to be a beauty, and also upon finding that she did not leak as all new boats are apt to do they called to their sister to come and have a row. Sadie was soon in the boat, and the boys went sailing up the creek at a pretty lively pace. As they came in view of Old Harry's cabin they decided to stop for him. The shouting of the boys soon brought the darkey out of his house, and as the boat touched the bank he exclaimed:

"Ah! Massa Jim, you has de spriest boat on de ribber."

Old Harry stepped into the boat without waiting for an invitation, for he considered, that if the boys were in a boat, his place was there also; for had he not taught them how to row and fish? And so apt pupils had they been that the Hull household had been well stocked with fish for the past three weeks. The old darkey seemed to know the feeding ground of every

variety of fish. When they would start out he would tell them what kind of fish they were going to catch, and sure enough the kind he mentioned would be the kind that they would catch the most of.

He would always admonish the boys not to tell others of these secret places, for he said that fish were "bery skeerie critters," and if they were once frightened from their favorite place it would be a long time before they would return to it again. They would often meet other fisherman in the creeks and on the river who said they had not caught anything, and when they asked him what luck he had had, he would reply in a joking and evasive manner, which would lead the inquirer to believe that he did not know much about fishing. But to return to the boating party. They had rowed out of the creek and were about two miles down the river when Sadie reminded them that mother was at home alone. The boys immediately turned the boat's bow up the river and in due time they arrived opposite their home. They now discovered that they had been away so long a time that the tide had fallen and that Sadie could not reach dry ground without walking ankle-deep in the mud.

The old man suggested that they pull down opposite the spring where he thought that they would find water enough to enable them to reach the high ground. This they did and found that they could approach the bank without much trouble, for the continuous flow of water from the spring had cut away the bank, thus forming a small inlet. They secured the boat to a stake which they drove into the ground and after removing the oars and rowlocks proceeded to the house.



James did not like the idea of leaving the boat so far away. He therefore decided that they would have to dig a canal so as to be able to bring the boat much nearer the house. The two boys went to work at the canal that very afternoon. They found it very dirty work handling the mud, but by removing their shoes and stockings and by standing on a piece of board, so as to prevent their sinking in the mud, they managed to make considerable headway, but when night came they still found that it would take another day's work before they could hope to complete it. They also knew that the tide would be up in the morning and that they could only work at it in the afternoon.

The next morning the boys were up bright and early working in the garden, of which they were very proud, for they had planted potatoes, corn, peas, string beans, lima beans, tomatoes, cabbages, onions, radishes, lettuce, cucumbers, and musk melons. These were all up and growing nicely. They hoed the ground loose around each plant and kept them free from weeds.

In three days the canal was completed. There was a float at the end of it to which the boat was moored. A pair of stairs led from the float to the top of the embankment and long stakes were driven into the mud at its sides and ends to keep the float in its proper position when the tide rose and fell.

The boys had noticed that there were plenty of wild ducks in the meadow and on the river, for they had often seen them alight on the water quite close to the house. They had also seen men standing or hiding on the river's bank, in houses built of reeds and cat-tails. While out on the water, about thirty yards away from

them, they would place their decoys or wooden ducks. These would be seen by the wild ducks as they were flying over. They would immediately commence to encircle around, and descend toward the decoys, sometimes settling on the water a short distance away, and then swim to them. At other times they would alight right among the decoys. It is then the hunter gets in his deadly work, sometimes killing seven or eight by one discharge of his gun.

James had decided that they must manage in some way to make money enough to buy a gun, for he had mentioned the subject to his father who had told him that he could not afford to buy it for him.

## CHAPTER III

### THEY DECIDE TO DO A LITTLE FISHING BUSINESS

Old Harry was consulted as to the best way to make the money. He said, "dat dey was going to make dat money, suer nuff." The boys asked their old friend if he would show them how and where to set the rat traps, which he readily agreed to do, but declared that they were not going to wait for the money from those skins. Harry then explained that it would take the skins some time to dry, and if they were in too much of a hurry to sell them they would not bring a very good price, for he said that in some seasons of the year the skins were only worth twenty-five cents each, and at other seasons they would sell as high as forty cents.

He also told them they would have to catch and sell fish and eels enough to pay for the gun, and he would show them how to do it. The boys started to get their boat and rat-traps. They soon had the boat down to Old Harry's house and as the old man stepped aboard he remarked, "dey was going to sot dem traps where dey would cotch some rats."

Taking his seat in the stern and the steering paddle in his hand he told the boys to let her go, and the boat started down the river at a rapid pace, for the boys were in high spirits at the thought of making a start to raise some money by their own skill and labor.

After the boat was in the middle of the river Harry told the boys to row steady and keep her straight, and taking one of the traps in his hand he proceeded to show them how to adjust it, so that the trap would be sure to spring shut when anything got into it. He

pressed the spring down until the jaws fell open and then holding it there with one hand, while with the forefinger and thumb of the other he adjusted the plate and tongue so that the end of the tongue set in the notch in the side of the plate. He now held the trap up for the boys to look at and said:

"I spose you tink dat dar trap is sot. You mount put dat trap in de rats' run and leave it dare from now to next year dis time and you wouldn't cotch no rat."

Harry showed them how to set the trap finely. This he did by moving the plate back and forth until he had worked the end of the tongue up to the very edge of the notch. He held the trap steady and level and placed it in the bottom of the boat. Then taking a match out of his pocket, he held it over the plate and letting it fall it struck the plate and set the trap off. The noise made by the jaws coming together startled the boys, and they now saw why the old man was so careful to explain how to hold the trap while setting it.

James asked the old man to show them again; this he willingly did, explaining every movement of his hand and fingers as he proceeded, and finally showing them that they could let the trap fly shut while holding it in their hands without danger of getting their fingers caught. James thought that he could manage to set it and after changing places with Harry he proceeded to try. He found the spring too stiff for his fingers, but by placing the strap on the seat and then placing his foot on the spring he succeeded in opening it, but it was fully half an hour before he succeeded in mastering it. Frank decided that he would not try to

master setting the traps that day but would wait until they had more time, when Jim or Harry could show him.

The boat was headed for the mouth of quite a large creek on the western side of the river, and as they entered it Harry explained that it was called "Moonachie" creek. After following this creek for about a mile and a half the bow of the boat was turned into a smaller creek. The boys were compelled to take the oars and use them as paddles, as the creek was too narrow to row in.

Upon looking ahead they discovered that this creek led into a swamp. Another discovery that they made, and one that pleased them very much, was the frequency with which they saw the very things that they were after, muskrats. These rats seemed larger than those they had seen in the meadow nearer their home. It was evident that they were much more plentiful and also much tamer for they would jump off the bank into the water just ahead of the boat, and so close to it that the boys succeeded in killing six of them before the boat came to the place where Harry chose to land.

The old man told them that as they had a few minutes to spare, on account of the tide being still too high, they might as well have something to eat. The boys did not know where this "something" was to come from for they had not brought anything with them, as they had no idea that they were going so far away from home. They had been two hours in reaching this place, and it would have been very difficult to have found two boys more thirsty, tired and hungry than they were. When old Harry stepped into the boat at

his house they noticed that he had a large bag with him. They also saw him place it under the seat very carefully, but they knew him too well to ask him what was in the bag, for he would not have told them until he got good and ready. He now brought forth this bag, and the first thing that he handed out was a jug. This he handed to James, telling him to help himself. He gladly did, and found the jug contained sweet cider, and not water, as he had expected. Having slaked his thirst he handed the jug to Frank who was as much surprised and pleased as James. By this time Old Harry had spread out on one of the seats of the boat a plentiful supply of bread, fried eels and fish.

Suffice it to say that the boys did justice to the meal that the old darkey had provided, and a happier trio than these three friends it would be hard to find. Just as they had finished eating, Old Harry held his fingers up to his lips and pointed up the creek and toward the opposite bank to which they were to look. At first the boys could see nothing, but as they kept looking in the direction in which the old man pointed, they saw an animal glide down the bank to the edge of the water. The animal had not seen them, for it came gliding down the creek directly toward them. Suddenly it stopped, when within about twenty feet of the boat, and raising its head in the air—for it seemed to have a very long neck for such a small animal—it gave one look of surprise and then disappeared. So quick were its movements that the boys did not see in which direction it had gone, and as they turned to look at the old man he burst into a loud laugh and said:

"Dat was a mink, boys; his skin is worf nine dollars. We must have dat fellow's skin sure."

Taking one of the traps with him, he told the boys to shove the boat to the other side of the creek. This they did, and as the boat struck the bank he jumped out, telling them to remain where they were until he returned. This he did in a short time, bringing with him a number of sticks. He told the boys that he had found the hole that the mink had come out of, and he said that his skin was theirs already.

"Ise has sot de trap and we cotch him sure."

The boys had brought fifteen of the two dozen traps that their father had bought for them, and, under the guidance of Old Harry, they were soon all placed in such a manner that the old darkey declared every one would "cotch a rat sure." The boys would watch him take a trap and when he found a muskrat house he would look for the underground passage that led to the creek. He showed the boys which were live passages and which were dead ones, and how to tell one from the other. He would then set the trap in one of these live passages, carry the small chain which was attached to the trap outside of the entrance, and fasten the end of the chain to one of the sticks which he would push deep into the mud.

The traps being all set the party started for home and as they managed to kill three more rats, by hitting them on the head as they were swimming across the creek, they felt in very good humor and well satisfied with their day's work. After two hours hard work rowing they arrived at home just in time to see their father come home from his day's work. He informed

them that he had only half a day's work more at Mr. Knapp's, and he was not sorry as he wished to build the scow.

At the supper table the boys related their day's experience, to which the whole family listened very attentively. When they had finished their story the father said:

"Well, boys, I think that your traps are set too far away from home. I judge that your hunting ground must be very near the unclaimed lands, and if this is so you had better wait until we get to cutting the grass when we can attend to the traps regularly. It takes too much time to go there as I shall want you to help me with the scow, but I can get along without you for the balance of the week."

Just at this moment the conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door, and upon opening it they found Old Harry with a lighted lantern in his hand. He was invited in and as he took a seat he told them that he had come to get the boys to help him catch some night-walkers, or large worms, which he proposed to make into bobs so that they could go bobbing for eels the following night. The boys immediately seized their hats and said that they were ready. Mr. Hull also had become interested and said that he would go with them. He told them to get their own lantern as they all would not be able to see with the light from one. This they did and, after procuring tin pails, they went out into the garden and in ten minutes they had picked up worms enough to make the bobs. These they carried to the out-house. Old Harry told James to ask his mother for a spool of strong black thread and also



to bring him the broom. When James returned with the thread and broom Harry broke off eight pieces of the thread, each piece about seven feet in length. He then took the broom and selected eight pieces of straw from it; then tying the straws to one end of each thread he handed one straw to each of the party. "Now do as I do," said Harry, and taking a worm in his hand he ran the straw through its entire body, thus stringing the worm. So expert was the old man at this work that he filled four of the strings while the rest of the party were filling one. He tied the ends of each string together, thus making eight separate endless strings of worms. These he looped up in as many loops as possible and then tied each one through the middle with a piece of fishing twine. He then wound plenty of thread around each one and hung them out on the side of the house to dry.



## CHAPTER IV

### BAITING FOR RATS THEY CATCH A TARTAR

At daybreak the next morning our young trappers could be seen in their boat on their way down the river to look at their traps. Old Harry was sitting in the stern and as the boys were excited at the prospect of catching the mink they fairly made the boat fly through the water. About one hour from the time they left their home they entered "Moonachie" creek, and in fifteen minutes more they were shoving the boat into the smaller creek. The boys were too anxious to reach the spot where they had seen the mink to bother much with the rats that they saw in the water. Presently they arrived at the spot and pushing an oar into the mud tied the boat to it, then proceeded in the direction where the trap had been set with Old Harry leading the way.

They had not walked more than one hundred yards when the old man told them to listen. This they did and were rewarded by hearing the chain on the trap rattle.

"We has him sure nuff," said the old darkey, and as the boys bounded forward they soon saw that Old Harry was right, for there in front of them was the mink with one of its fore legs caught in the trap. Old Harry soon dispatched the mink by striking it a blow on the back of the head with his stick and taking it out of the trap handed it to the boys, saying it was a fine skin well worth ten dollars.

They examined the fur of the mink and noted that it was much finer and richer in color than that of

the muskrat. The other traps were visited and all, with the exception of one which they could not find, had a muskrat in them. These were killed in the same manner as the old man killed the mink and as each trap was emptied it was reset. A search was now commenced for the missing trap. They soon found the passage in which it had been set, but the trap was gone.

The old darkey bent down and examined the place very carefully and then said, that he "was going to find dat trap," and for the boys to go back to the boat and stay there until he returned. James also examined the place where the trap had been, and discovered that some animal had been caught in it, and that it had struggled and pulled so hard on the chain that at last it had succeeded in pulling the stick, to which it was fastened, out of the mud. He also concluded that the animal could not be far away for there was a trail made in the mud by the chain and trap being dragged through it. This showed that whatever it was that was in the trap had only been away from the place a short time before the trappers made their appearance.

They gathered up the muskrats and soon had them in the boat where they waited some time before Old Harry returned. While they were waiting James noticed that the creeks and ditches of this meadow were favorite places for ducks, for they saw large numbers settle in the meadow nearby. They could also hear the familiar "quack, quack, quack," a peculiar sound that these birds make when feeding, excited, or disturbed.

The old darkey at last made his appearance, and they heard him talking to himself long before they could see

him. They knew by this that the old man was excited and that something unusual had occurred. Both boys jumped out of the boat on the bank and started toward the old man, for they saw that he had something with him that was giving him a great deal of trouble. After dragging what he had a few feet he would stop and talk to it. He caught sight of the boys coming toward him and told them to go back to the boat and get a piece of rope. This they did, and when they reached the spot where the old man stood they saw that he had a large snapping turtle.

A more ugly looking or savage creature than this turtle they had never seen. His long, ugly head, with the bead-like eyes in it, reminded the boys of a large snake they had seen in the museum at Central Park. This head would dart out from under the shell and snap at any and every object that came near it. The missing trap was fastened to one of the turtle's front paws. These paws were thicker than a man's wrist and the claws on the end of them were more like those seen on a bear, only they were sharper.

Great drops of perspiration rolled down Old Harry's face, for he had had a hard struggle to get the turtle to where the boys found him. After resting for a few minutes the turtle was turned over on its back. He would have soon turned back again, but the old man placed a stick on the center of the underplate, or stomach, thus holding him down. Harry told Frank to hold the turtle down while he and James removed the trap; but just then the turtle decided to make an extra effort to get right side up by stretching forth his neck and then turning his head partly under his body.

This gave him a chance to turn over and in spite of the effort that Frank made he soon righted himself.

The turtle tried to walk off but the old man grabbed him by the tail, and growing excited, began talking to it:

"No, yer doesn't get away from me dat way. Yellow Joe told me yer was over here but Ise did not believe him, and now Ise got yer Ise going to keep yer. All de niggers in de county has been after yer, and deys all want to gaze on yer, but Ise going to fix yer and take yer home wif me, my honey, so yer mought as well stop yer kicking."

The old man tied a rope to the tail and handing it to the boys told them to hold it fast and he would fix him. He now made a bridle by taking two pieces of the rope using a piece of wood for a bit, then holding it in front of the turtle, it was soon in the turtle's mouth, for he snapped at it at once. He brought the pieces of rope together back by the tail and made a slip-knot in them.

"Now hit him on the nose wif my stick, Frank," said Harry.

This Frank did and the turtle drew in his head while the old man drew the knot tighter.

"Hit him again, Frank," and further in went the head and more of the slacked rope was taken up.

Harry fastened it, making sure that it would not slip, then they removed the trap from his paw, and Harry carried the prize to the boat. This turtle weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds and measured thirty inches in length and twenty inches in width.

"Dat was de biggest snapper what was eber cotched

in dis meadow or on de ribber," said Harry. "We will keep him and show him to de people for a while and den sell him."

They reset the two traps and started for home, arriving there about eleven o'clock. As they drew into the canal by the house Mrs. Hull and Sadie came down to the dock to welcome them, and also to see what luck they had had. They were both agreeably surprised and told the boys and Harry to hurry into the house for they had prepared the dinner early, knowing that they would be hungry upon their return. So eager had they been to get away that morning that they had not stopped for breakfast and were very hungry, as well as tired.

After washing they seated themselves at the table and while they were doing justice to the dinner the door opened and in walked Mr. Hull.

"You have had extra good luck to-day, Harry," said Mr. Hull, addressing the old man. "I have been down to the boat looking at your catch and you have done well. What are you going to do with the turtle?"

Harry replied that the turtle belonged to the boys and they were going to sell it and put the money away so they could buy a gun and a set of decoys.

Mr. Hull asked him what he thought the turtle was worth. The old man looked up and said:

"Worf just as much as dey could get for him. All de darkeys in de county has been trying to cotch dat fellow for de past six years, and de Hoboken Turtle Club has offered twenty-five dollars for him"; but he thought that "de sports at de Mansion House in Hackensack would give more."

He also said that they would have plenty of people call to have a look at this turtle, for when it became known that the big turtle of the Hackensack was caught they would all want to see it.

This turtle had been seen at different times and by different people. Some had only seen his large head and thick neck projecting out of the water. These would invariably declare that his body was six feet long. Others had seen him floating on the surface of the water and he looked much larger than he really was.

"We will have to make a box to keep this fellow in," said Mr. Hull, "and as I am through at Mr. Knapp's we may as well get right to work at it. Harry and James can skin the rats while Frank and myself make the box. You know, Harry, that you promised to take us all out bobbing for eels tonight and we will not have much time to lose, unless the place you are going to is quite near by."

Harry replied that as they wanted to sell the eels he wanted to go where they would catch large ones, and it would take about one hour to reach the place. Mr. Hull said they had better start about six o'clock and the old man replied that that was about the right time.

As they stepped out of the house to commence the afternoon's work a farm wagon, drawn by a team of mules, passed the house. Upon seeing Old Harry the driver stopped the team and told the old man that he wished to see him. He wanted to know if Harry would have some fish for him when he returned from the city the following day. The old darkey replied that he would have something in the way of fish.



"It mout be eels and den again it moutin."

The farmer replied that if he could not have anything else the eels would do and was just about to drive off when Harry said:

"Say, Massa Zabriskie, has yer ebber heard of de big turtle what was in de ribber?"

The farmer said that he had heard of it.

"Well," said Old Harry, "if yer want to see dat fellow Ise can show him to yer, for me and does two boys dere—pointing to the boys—cotched him dis morning."

The farmer said that he wanted to see the turtle, at the same time getting out of his wagon and following the old man down to the canal. It is needless to say that the farmer spread the news all along the road to Hoboken that the big turtle had been caught, and that very afternoon about twenty people called to have a look at it.

The turtle was safely boxed and the bridle was removed after he was in the box. The box had strips nailed across the top so as to give him air and also so that he could be seen. Harry said that he thought they would be able to sell nearly all the eels that they could catch to the people who called to see the turtle.

The old darkey advised Mr. Hull to make two boxes to put the eels in, for he said that they were going to catch plenty of them and they would want some place to put them when they returned home. The two boxes were soon made and a cover with leather hinges put on each so that they could be easily opened.

In the meantime Harry and James had been busy skinning the rats. They had to make the shingles over

which the skins were stretched the proper width and sharpen them on one end. The skin was then drawn over the shingle with the fur side next to the wood, or, in other words, with the outside in. The skins, after being stretched on the board and tacked so that they could not shrink, were placed in the sun to dry. They were brought into the house every night and taken to the attic. Sadie attended to this, as she took a great interest in her brothers' work, and was a good, kind and loving sister. She did all the housework, mended and kept their clothes in order, and saved her mother all the work possible. A better daughter and sister than Sadie Hull it would have been hard to find.

The boat was prepared for the bobbing party. The bobs, lines, lanterns and overcoats were placed aboard and, supper being ready, all hands went into the house. At the table they discussed as to what had better be done with the turtle over night. Harry told them that there would probably be a lot of darkies around to look at it and he thought it had better be brought into the house before they went away. Mr. Hull agreed with him and further said that he did not like the idea of leaving the women folks home alone with so many strangers about. Harry replied that "as far as dat goes, it was all right, for Ise sent word to my old friend, Will Sisco, and told him to be at de house before six o'clock and Ise sure he will come."

At that moment the old man listened and then said his friend was outside, for he heard his voice. Mr. Hull told him to ask his friend in. As Harry opened the door a large negro appeared in the doorway, and after being invited in, was introduced to the family.

This man was different from any other negro in the country. He walked and talked like a woman, also doing woman's work, such as washing, etc.; but he dressed like a man—was large and very powerful, being noted for his great strength.

Mr. Hull had heard of this man before and as he was vouched for by their old friend, he felt comfortable about leaving the folks in his charge.

They now brought the turtle into the house and Will's eyes fairly bulged out of his head as he saw its size, for he, too, was a great turtle hunter, and had had many a hunt for this very turtle. So great was his admiration that he could hardly eat his supper. Mr. Hull told Will that he was going to leave the household in his charge and that he could show the turtle to any one he pleased, and everything being ready the bobbing party started.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE FISHING BUSINESS PROVES A GREAT SUCCESS

The boat was headed down the river with the two boys at the oars, the father in the bow, and Old Harry at the stern steering, as usual. Silently they rowed, watching every now and then a flock of wild ducks that flew over their heads, and prepared to settle in the meadow for the night, where they expected to remain undisturbed. After rowing for about three-quarters of an hour the old man drew the basket that contained the bobs and lines toward him and began to get them ready for use. He then told Frank to take in his oars, and presently the bow of the boat was turned toward the eastern bank of the river.

It was now quite dark and they could not see where they were going, but so well acquainted was the old darkey with the creek and river that he was just as much at home in it in the night as he was during the day. The bow of the boat struck the grass and as James stopped rowing Harry said, "Let me have one of your oars, boy." This James did and the old man began to shove the boat over the grass, which was partly covered by water. He pushed the boat along in this manner for three hundred yards, when suddenly it shot into deep water. They seemed to be in a large creek, but Harry explained that it had at one time been a creek, but the banks of the creek had slid, thus partly closing up both outlets and forming a pond. The water in this pond was freshened every day by the tide overflowing the low bank at the river end, thus pushing the stagnant water out at the other end.

It was here in this pond that they were going to bob. Harry found the place in the pond that he considered the best, and then shoving the stern of the boat against the bank drove an oar deep into the mud. He fastened a rope to this oar and, giving the boat a shove, sent it over to the opposite bank. Harry told Mr. Hull to push an oar into the mud and fasten a rope to it also, as he wished to have the boat lie across the creek and right in the center of it.

They soon had the boat in the right position and after the lanterns were lighted they were ready for the sport. The old man handed a line to each of the party, telling them to use it the same as if they were fishing, the only difference being that when they felt a bite to pull in as fast as they could. Old Harry's line was the last overboard, but he caught four eels before any one else succeeded in getting an eel into the boat. Harry saw that he would have to give them a few lessons or the eels would have their bobs and they would not have the eels. He therefore told them to take in their bobs and watch him catch a few and he would explain how it was done.

They watched him very closely and noted that when the eel pulled or bit the bob Harry would pull in his line, hand over hand, until he thought it was near the top of the water. He would then draw the line through the forefinger and thumb of one hand, keeping that hand over the side of the boat, and quite close to the water. The moment the bob made its appearance at the top of the water he would stop drawing it, and lift the bob, eel and all, into the boat. They saw him catch one very large eel in this manner, in fact it was

so large that the old man became very much excited while hauling it in. He fairly rose to his feet as he landed it in the boat. This eel was as thick as a man's wrist, and was fully two and one-half feet long. It had been so voracious that it had tried to swallow the whole bob. By doing this its teeth had become very much entangled in the thread and it was some time before the old man could shake it loose. It made quite a noise as it struck the bottom of the boat. It also kicked up quite a row, making considerable noise lashing its tail around, but it found out that it was in the open air, and not in the water, and soon quieted down.

The rest of the party proceeded to try again, and it was not long before they caught the knack of hauling in the eels successfully and the fun became fast and furious. Frank, however, caused a sensation by catching the prize eel of the evening. This eel gave the boy a great deal of trouble and at one time it was a question whether he would succeed in getting it into the boat or the eel pulling him out. The others were too busy with their own lines to give him any assistance. So eager was Frank to land his catch, that when the eel came to the surface he raised it so high, and was pulling so hard that it flew clear across the boat into the water again. To add to his trouble, the boy dropped his line, and also stepped on the eels in the bottom of the boat. These being very slippery, Frank's feet flew from under him and he sat down on the seat again with a thud. The sitting down part of the performance was fortunate, for in doing so he sat upon part of his line, otherwise it would have all been overboard for the eel was still on the other end of it.

Frank recovered his line, declining the assistance now offered by the others. He at last succeeded in getting his prize into the boat, and it was a beauty, for they found upon weighing it the next morning that it tipped the scales at four pounds.

Harry said that as their bobs were very nearly used up he thought they had better try another place farther up the pond, and if they would pull up the oars, and allow the boat to drift with the tide, he would tie the fresh bobs to the lines. This they did and when the boat arrived opposite the mouth of a small ditch the old man told them to hold her fast. At this place they met with even greater success than before, and they pulled in the eels as fast as they could throw their lines overboard and haul them in again.

After fishing one hour at this last mentioned place, the old man said they would have to go, as the tide had been falling for some time, and if they remained much longer where they were they would have to stay all night as they would not be able to cross the bar at the mouth of the creek. They were soon out on the river on their way home, where they arrived by twelve o'clock. The old darkey told Mr. Hull and the boys to go into the house and tell his friend, Will, to come and have a look at the eels. He also said that they could go to bed as he and Will would take care of the eels, for the boat was half filled with them, and unless they were looked after some of the larger ones would surely get away. Before they could start for the house the door opened and Will was heard coming toward the dock to see what luck they met with, for he had been



watching for their return. As he looked at the eels in the boat he gave a whistle, and said:

"Well, Harry, I don't see where you found all those eels. You must have some way of calling them to you for I never saw so many eels caught in so short a time."

Mr. Hull and the boys went into the house and retired for the night, well satisfied with their evening's work, for they had caught between four and five hundred pounds of eels.

The next morning they were busy making boxes in which to place the eels, so that they could send them to the city market with the expressman. They sent three hundred and twenty-five pounds to market, and kept about one hundred pounds to sell to people who would call to see the turtle. When the expressman returned from the city he handed Mr. Hull twenty dollars and said that he had sold the eels for seven cents a pound, and that he would keep the two dollars and seventy-five cents for his commission and expressage. They also sold ten dollars' worth of eels to people who called during the day. These they sold at ten cents a pound, making thirty dollars in all they received for the eels.

During the day every hotel and tavern-keeper for miles around called and made an offer for the turtle. They were well aware that if they could secure this prize it would attract so many people to their house that they would get their money back again, as most of the people would visit the bar-room and spend some of their money. As the afternoon wore away the bidding for the turtle increased.

They had received an offer of sixty dollars, but as

they had received word from the Hoboken Turtle Club not to sell it until they had seen it Old Harry advised them not to accept the offer, although the boys were very much inclined to do so.

The club also said that they would be at the house by eleven o'clock the following day. They decided to act upon the old man's advice in this matter, and finally refused the offer. Most of the eels that they sold the people had to be skinned, so this work fell to Harry and Will. It was fun to watch these two experts strip an eel of its hide. They would grab one of the slimy, slippery creatures, make two slashes at it with their knives, and then the head and skin would fly in one direction and the body would drop into a pan. This would all be done in less time than it takes the writer to tell it.

The news that the big turtle of the Hackensack had been caught by the Hull boys, and that they had refused sixty dollars for it, now spread far and wide throughout the county, and it was the chief topic of conversation in the grocery stores and taverns. About three hundred people had called to have a look at it that day, and they expected that the place would be overrun with visitors the following day.

The boys cleaned their boat, by drawing it out of the water on the float, and giving it a thorough scrubbing with a broom and water. Old Harry had reminded the boys that they had not visited their traps that day, but he said that if Mr. Hull would close the deal with the Turtle Club men he and the boys could attend to the traps the next morning. Mr. Hull readily agreed to this and asked the old man what he should

accept for it. He replied that the one turtle was hardly enough for them and they would probably want two smaller ones to make up the quantity they usually had.

"See what dey gives you for dis big one and den offer to furnish two hundred pounds of turtle for one hundred dollars and I tink dat deys will give it to yer. Tell dem dat yer will not send de turtles down to dem before next week, because we want to keep him and sell some fish."

Mr. Hull understood what Harry meant very well, and he also knew that they need not look for him to return very early the next day.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE OLD DARKEY MAKES A GREAT CATCH

Harry and his friend, Will, went off to find some bait ; for he said that they would have to catch some fish.

The Hull family were eating their supper when Mr. Hull said, "I do not think we will be doing just the right thing if we take all the money we get for the turtle and fish. Old Harry, I know, will not want to take any of it, for he declares that it belongs to the boys, but I do not feel easy about it. What do you advise, mother? What had we best do?"

Mrs. Hull thought for a moment before replying; then she said, "I should offer the money to him and if he refuses to take it we must give him the value of it in some way or other. You know he is very fond of his church and Sunday-school. I notice that his clothes are pretty well worn, they do not fit him very well, and why would it not be a good idea to get him a good suit of clothes, a hat, and some shirts, all for Sunday wear?"

"Capital plan, mother," said Mr. Hull; and the boys clapped their hands in approval, for they knew that it would make their old friend happy and as proud as a peacock.

"We must not let him know what we intend to do, for he is very sensitive and would want to have his own way which, we all know, is not the right way," said Mr. Hull.

"I think that if I select a suit of clothes one size larger than I wear it would about fit him."

"Another thing I have noticed," said Mrs. Hull, "is

that he is spending about all his time with our boys, and while we have given him his dinner and supper, I would not be surprised to learn that the old man does not get any breakfast. Now I think, father, if he is going to devote his time to our welfare, the least that we can do is to give him a good home."

Mr. Hull agreed with his wife on this point and said that James had better speak to the old man about it, while they were visiting their traps. This James said he would do, and then asking Sadie to prepare a good big basket of lunch for them to take along the next day they went out to see if Will and Harry had returned. They found the two friends down by the canal and sent them into the house to get their supper.

After supper the two darkeys brought the large turtle into the house and then went to Old Harry's cabin for the night.

Early the next morning the young trappers, with their old friend, could be seen rowing down the river to visit their traps. They had brought the remainder of the two dozen traps with them, also a turtle hook. The latter belonged to Old Harry. It was simply a long slender pole, with a stout steel hook fastened to one end. As they entered the creek the old man took the hook and ran it into every muskrat run, or hole, they came to. At last after trying about twenty of these runs his patience was rewarded, for upon running the hook into a hole he exclaimed, "Here is one at last!" The old darkey soon drew the hook out, with a turtle weighing about ten pounds at the end of it. He placed a bridle on the turtle and it was put in the bow of the boat.

They now proceeded to attend to their traps, finding that all but one contained a rat. This trap James had set, but Harry showed him that he had not set it fine enough. He pointed out to them where the rat's muddy feet had been upon the plate and they plainly saw that this trap would have had a rat in it if it had been properly set. As each trap was emptied it was reset. They also set the traps that they brought with them.

Harry told the boys to carry the rats to the boat and wait there for him as he was going to follow up some of the ditches to try and find another turtle. They soon had the rats in the boat and had been waiting some little time when Frank noticed something sticking up out of the water only a few feet away from the boat. He tried to call James' attention to it, but the "something" disappeared under the water before James could get a look at it. He asked Frank what it looked like, and he replied that it looked like a turtle's head. James laughed and said he guessed that was just what it was.

They sat very still, waiting for the head to reappear. After waiting ten minutes they saw a turtle come out of the water and crawl up the bank. The boys remained very quiet, for they did not wish to frighten him. They wanted him to get far enough away from the water so he could not return before they could get to him. They watched him crawl up into the reeds or flags, and then concluded it was time for them to go after him. Just then Old Harry returned with a small turtle, and the boys lost no time in pointing out to him where he could get another. The old man soon

returned with the third turtle, which was very nearly as large as the first one they had caught.

He said that they had enough turtles for one day, and after putting bridles on the last two, they got under way and proceeded toward the river. Upon arriving at the river the boat's bow was turned down the stream and the old man told the boys to row away and he would have a try for a bass. Harry opened the bait box and taking an eel from it he soon had the skin off. After removing the backbone, he baited a hook with a piece of the eel and dropped it overboard. The boys stopped rowing for a moment, but the old man told them to go ahead, and they thought that that was a very funny way to fish. Harry paid out about thirty feet of his line and then held it taut.

Presently the old man gave his arm a sudden lunge forward, and at the same instant a fine large fish appeared at the top of the water. It fairly made the water boil as it struggled to free itself from the hook.

"Haul him in, Harry," said James, as he noticed that the old man let the line slip through his fingers. "What is the matter, can't you hold him?" and James started to help the old man.

"Sit down, boys, and keep quiet. Ise got a big job on my hands to get dis fellar in de boat."

The old darkey was excited, for he kept talking to the fish, calling it all kinds of pet names. He saw that he would have to hold his catch harder, for he was getting nearly to the end of his line. As Harry pinched the line, the bass "broke water" again, and as he went under, the line slacked. The boys thought he was gone, but Old Harry's arms began to work back



and forth with the rapidity of a piston rod of a steam engine as he pulled in the line hand over hand. Again the line became taut, and once more the bass came to the top, this time quite close to the boat.

They saw that the fish was a large one and that if Old Harry succeeded in getting it into the boat it would be a triumph of skill over strength. Time and again did the old man get his catch near the boat, and as often would it plunge away, taking a good part of the line with it. For one whole hour did the battle wage, and it was fast and furious.

Harry knew that he dare not allow the fish to have one moment's rest. He kept the line taut all the time. This made the fish struggle and spend its strength. The fish was a good general, however, and when he wanted a rest he would swim toward the boat. Harry told the boys that if he got all the line out he would have to hold him, and then he would soon tear himself loose. James had provided against this thing occurring by cutting the sinker and hooks from his own line and then tying both lines together. It was fortunate that he did so, for the fish made a desperate struggle to escape, and not only ran out all of the first line but half of the second one also. After putting up the strongest kind of a fight for one hour and a quarter the fish began to show signs of weakening, and after one more effort to get away the old man landed him in the boat.

Old Harry was so completely exhausted that he almost fainted and it was some time before he attempted to remove the hook from the fish's mouth. The boys gave him a drink of water, and offered him

something to eat. This reminded James of what his mother had said about Harry not having any breakfast, and also the question of his coming to live with them.

James dropped the anchor overboard, saying that they might as well have something to eat. They each had a sandwich, and then told the old man that they had enough, for they noticed that he was very hungry, and they felt ashamed of themselves for not thinking of the old man before. They asked Harry if there was any chance of their catching any fish where they now were. He told them that it was not a very good place, but if they would pull up the anchor and row down the river half a mile, he would show them where they could catch some perch. This they did, and when they had reached the place Harry had chosen they dropped the anchor again.

James and Harry handed Frank his line, telling him to go ahead and fish while they proceeded to disentangle their lines, which had become pretty well snarled by the big fish when it flopped around in the boat.

Frank was hauling in the perch at a pretty lively rate and Harry was busy catching floating sea-weed to cover the bass, to prevent the sun from scorching it, when James said to him:

"Harry, how would you like to give up being alone and come and live with us?"

"Ise guess your mother and father would have something to say 'bout dat," said Harry.

"Well," said James, "suppose that they were willing, would you come?"

The old man hesitated, and James said: "You have been with us almost every day, Harry, for the past two

months, and you have not been looking out for yourself. Now if you do not look out for your own interest you must let us do so. You did not have any breakfast this morning or that fish would not have tired you out so. Now, Harry, if you are going to do so much for us, you must let us do what we can for you. If you do not have proper food, and take better care of yourself, you will get sick. You must come with us, Harry. Don't you say so, Frank?"

"Yes, yes," said Frank, "mother and father both said only last night that it would not do for you to give up all your time to us and not get anything in return for it. Say yes, Harry."

The old man placed his head between his hands, his elbows on his knees, and the boys knew by that he wanted to be let alone and settle the question for himself. He sat in that position for about an hour, the boys in the meantime trying to fish, but so anxious were they about the decision the old man would make that they did not catch a single fish.

Finally Old Harry straightened up and said: "Ise spec you has all talked dis ting over and Ise guess you is right. If your folks tink it is best Ise has better do as dey says."

"Good boy, Harry," said Frank, "I knew you would do it."

James, however, rose, and taking the old man by the hand, said:

"Harry, you are one of our family now, and whatever may happen I always want you to count on me as your friend."

The old man had tears in his eyes, so James thought enough had been said, for he exclaimed:

"Come, Harry, let us get to work and catch a few more fish and then we will go home; perhaps we can get there before the people come to buy the turtle."

Our three friends now went to work in earnest and it was not long before they had, what seemed to the boys to be, quite a respectable lot of fish, but Harry wanted to catch a few more, he said, for they could easily sell them. They had in the boat fourteen muskrats, three snapping turtles weighing about twenty-five pounds, the large bass, which they thought would weigh about twelve or fourteen pounds, and thirty pounds of perch. This they considered to be enough for one day and they decided to start for home, which they did, feeling happier and in better spirits than when they started out in the morning.

## CHAPTER VII

### EVERYBODY BIDS FOR THE PRIZE TURTLE

When our young trappers and their old friend came within sight of their home they saw that there were quite a large number of visitors there. A number of carriages and wagons stood on the road in front of the house, and there were quite a number of men walking about the yard. The boat was discovered coming up the creek by those at the house, and the crowd began to make its way toward the dock and canal. The boat was soon into the canal and at the float. The turtles were handed out and carried to the outhouse. The rats were also taken there, and then boxes were brought into which the perch were placed. The crowd had not yet seen the bass, for it was well covered up with grass and hay.

Old Harry turned to the crowd and said: "Now, gentlemen, Ise going to show yer somefin what will make your mouf water." He stooped down, and running his hand under the hay, placed his fingers in the fish's mouth, and pulling it out held it up for them to look at. To say that they were surprised does not express it. At first they were speechless, but they soon found their tongues, and a broadside of questions were fired at Harry and the boys. The fish was carried by the old man up to the outhouse, and hung up, so that every one could admire it to their heart's content. The men in the crowd began to make an offer for the fish, especially the hotel men, and the four gentlemen from the Turtle Club. Harry told them that it did not belong to him but to the boys. Mr. Hull saw how

things were going and after calling Old Harry aside and talking to him for a few minutes he mounted a box and addressing the crowd said:

"There seems to be a number of gentlemen present who wish to purchase that splendid fish. I do not blame them for I would like to have a slice of that fellow myself. Now, gentlemen, that fish is for sale, and we propose to give every gentleman present a chance to buy it. As soon as our fishermen (pointing to the boys and Harry) have had something to eat we will put that fish up at auction and sell it to the highest bidder."

While the fishermen were eating their dinner the fish was weighed and found to weigh fifteen pounds and ten ounces. After the diners came out of the house Mr. Hull again mounted the box and addressing the crowd, said:

"Gentlemen, I understand that this fish that I am now about to offer for sale is one of the finest and largest specimens of striped bass that have ever been caught in this river. It has not been out of the water two hours, and the gentleman who is fortunate enough to secure this prize will surely get the worth of his money. Now, how much am I offered for this fish? Three dollars am I offered, four, do I hear? Four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight dollars I am offered; nine, do I hear? Why, gentlemen, it is worth more than that to hang up on your tavern stoop, let alone to eat. Ah! nine dollars, ten, ten dollars; yes, that is your bid, Mr. Van Winkle (this gentleman was proprietor of the Mansion House at Hackensack). Eleven, twelve, thirteen dollars, I am offered. Do I hear fourteen?

Thirteen dollars once, thirteen dollars twice,—fourteen just in time. Fifteen dollars I am offered. Are you all through? Going at fifteen dollars. Fifteen dollars once, twice, third and last call—sold!” and Mr. Hull brought his stick down on the box with a loud crack.

The bidding and competition for the large fish had been principally between Mr. Van Winkle and the gentlemen representing the Turtle Club, Mr. Van Winkle finally securing the prize. The turtles as yet had not been sold, and Mr. Hull concluded to offer them to the highest bidder. In other words, to auction them off also.

Mr. Hull again addressed the crowd and said: “The next thing on the programme is the turtles and we propose to sell them separately. Here is a fine turtle weighing ten pounds. How much am I offered for it?”

The first bid was five dollars, then six, then seven, and finally it was bought by the Turtle Club for eight dollars.

The small turtle was next sold for five dollars to the same party. The third turtle weighed about twelve pounds and was the one that the boys saw crawl out of the creek. The proprietor of the Mansion House seemed determined to get this one, for he bid it up to fifteen dollars, and it was knocked down to him at that figure.

The large turtle was taken out of its box and placed upon the ground. A rope was tied to its tail and then fastened to a post to prevent its getting away. The turtle showed up to good advantage; his legs and neck being extended, the sale commenced. Mr. Hull lost

no time in setting forth the merits, weight and size of the turtle, but said:

"Gentlemen, I have a standing offer of seventy-five dollars for this turtle."

This announcement practically killed the chances of a great many of the would-be purchasers, and when the bidding started it was found that there were only two competitors for the prize, the Mansion House and the Turtle Club. These two soon raised the figure to one hundred dollars, but the club men were not to be denied, and it was finally knocked down to the Hoboken Turtle Club for one hundred and five dollars.

The perch were sold to different parties at ten cents a pound, and after selling thirty pounds they announced that they had no more fish to sell as they wanted to keep a few for their own use. All the purchasers came forward to pay for what they had bought, James acting as cashier. When the club men came forward they said: "We are going to hold our annual dinner in about two weeks from to-day and we would like to have you get us about twenty pounds more of turtle. Can you do it? If so, we will pay you ten dollars now for them."

James agreed to furnish the turtles, and accepted this additional amount of money.

The buyers all insisted upon taking their purchases home with them, and as there was no further attraction at the Hull cottage the crowd soon dispersed, leaving the family to itself.

The boys counted their money and found they had made as much in three days as they had expected to make in three months, for they had on hand one



hundred and ninety-one dollars. At the supper table that night it was decided that Mr. Hull and James should go to the city the following day, while Frank and Harry should look after the traps.

The purchasing of the gun was talked over and it was decided to buy two guns, one ten- and one twelve-bore. It was also decided to buy decoy ducks, twenty pounds of shot, five pounds of powder, and enough rubber boots to go around.

The question of Old Harry becoming one of the family was also discussed. The old man would not take one cent of the money, for he said that it all belonged to the boys.

Mr. Hull then said, "Well, Harry, you can sleep at your cabin for a night or two and by that time mother and I will have a room prepared for you, but you must come here for your meals."

The old man replied that he would do so, but that he "spected dey did not have much room in de house, but if dey would make a room in one end of de out-house it would be a mighty sight better dan de old cabin."

"Your suggestion is a good one, Harry, and when James and I return from the city to-morrow we will go right at it." He also told the boys and Harry that they must lay aside all idea of fishing for the present, as they must build the scow.

Early the following morning James and his father could have been seen making their way toward the city where they arrived by seven o'clock.

The first place visited by them was Washington market, where Mr. Hull purchased a large supply of groceries which he ordered to be sent to the express

office. They then went to a clothier's, as they wanted to get the clothes for Old Harry before they bought anything else. Here they purchased a fine suit of broad cloth. They also bought a high hat, some shirts, and underwear. In fact they spent fifty dollars of the money for things for the old man. They found a gun store, and upon entering said that they would like to look at some guns.

The salesman conducted them to a floor up-stairs, where they found hundreds of guns standing in racks in show cases. He asked them a great many questions, and learned that they wished a gun suitable for duck shooting. James had been told by Harry what kind of a gun to select and how to tell a good one from a poor one. He would try a gun by throwing it up to his shoulder, and trying the locks or springs. After examining about twenty of the guns, and having set three of them to one side, they selected one of the three, and asked the price of it. They were very much surprised to find that they had selected a gun that was worth one hundred dollars. They told the man that they did not intend to pay over fifty dollars for a gun, and if he could not give them what they wanted for that amount, they would have to go elsewhere. The man asked them what was the matter with some of the guns that he had shown them. James replied that the most of those guns were heavy at the muzzle, which is a bad fault. On some of them the springs in the locks were too weak, and others were too stiff. The man saw that it would be a difficult matter to give his customers just what they wanted at the price they named. James told him that they wanted to purchase

two guns; the ones that they had been looking at were ten gauge. He asked to be shown some twelve gauge guns. "I want a very light one for a boy much younger than myself." The salesman told them to wait and he would get them what they wanted. He went to some other part of the building and returned, bringing four guns with him. He said the price of these guns was fifty dollars each, but there was so little demand for guns that were as light as these, that he could sell them one for thirty.

James and his father were very much pleased with these guns, and soon selected one that they said would do. They were told that if after trying it they did not like the gun to return it and select another.

"Now let us see if we cannot find a large one that will suit you," said the man.

They examined all the large guns on the floor, but they had seen the high priced gun and they were looking for one equally as good. The salesman was just about discouraged, and our friends had just decided to go to another store, when the man said:

"I'll tell you what I can do. We have a number of second hand guns that have been sent to us by sporting men to sell. These can be bought at half their original cost, and possibly you can find one among them that will suit."

They went down into the basement of the building, and going to a rack that held about thirty guns, which the man said were all second hand, they proceeded to examine them. They had not looked at more than one or two, when a gentleman came down the stairs, and upon seeing the salesman, said, "Hello, Charlie, so you

are here. I have been looking all over the store for you." The gentleman came forward and was introduced to Mr. Hull, his name being Sanger. These two began talking while the salesman was attending to James.

Presently Mr. Sanger said, "Why don't you sell them that gun of mine, Charlie?" and going up to the rack he drew out of it the finest looking gun of the lot. Charlie replied that the gentleman did not care to pay over fifty dollars for a gun. Mr. Sanger handed the gun to James, who examined it very closely. He spoke to the father and asked him where he lived; and when Mr. Hull told him he exclaimed, "Ah! I have had many a fine day's sport on that river. By the way, I met my friend, Van Winkle, from Hackensack, about one hour ago, and he was telling me some kind of a big fish and turtle story."

Mr. Hull told him that what his friend had told him was true, and then proceeded to tell him about catching and selling the fish and turtles.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BOYS PURCHASE GUNS FOR NEXT FALL'S SPORT

To say that James was pleased with the gun he was looking at would hardly express it. He inquired of the salesman what it could be bought for.

"One hundred dollars," replied the man.

James shook his head, and was placing the gun back into the rack, when Mr. Sanger said:

"What is the matter, my lad? Does not that gun suit you? I had that piece made for me and it cost one hundred and fifty dollars."

"I know," replied James, "that it is the finest gun in this store, but I cannot afford to pay any such amount of money for a gun. There is not anything the matter with that gun, sir, only it is too good for me."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Sanger; "let us see if we cannot make a bargain. Now, I have two other guns, but I always liked this one for duck shooting. My other guns are a little more polished on the outside than this one, but for killing at a distance, this gun tops them all. I'll tell you what I will do, I will sell you this gun for fifty dollars, providing you will allow me to use it when I come up to your neighborhood to go duck shooting. What do you say?"

So surprised was James at first that it was a few seconds before he could reply. Then he stepped forward and extending his hand, said, "I accept your offer, and wish to thank you for it. I know it was made through kindness, and I will try and repay you some day."

"I will tell you, my boy, how you can do me a good

turn. I have to depend upon the hotel men to send me word when there are plenty of ducks, but quite often I go there and find them very scarce. Sometimes I think that they send me this false information so as to get me up there, knowing that if I stop at their hotel I will spend a few dollars at their house. I do not mind spending the money, providing I can have a good day's sport, so if you say the word I will depend upon you. Here is my address."

James told him that he could depend upon him and that he would send him the first pair of ducks he shot with the gun.

They bought powder and shot flasks, caps, powder and one dozen decoy ducks. These cost them thirty-five dollars, and after giving the man the address of the express, bidding Mr. Sanger good day, and also inviting him to come up and they would give him a good day's fishing, they went out to find a shoe store.

They found a store on the corner of Greenwich and Barclay streets and bought four pair of rubber boots at three dollars and fifty cents a pair. They counted their money and found that they had just twelve dollars left of the money that belonged to the boys. James said that he wanted to get something for mother and Sadie, and thought that they would each like a pair of slippers.

"You are a good lad, my son," said Mr. Hull, "not to forget them; buy what you think will fit them."

James went over to the counter where the man was wrapping up the boots and told him that he wanted three pair of slippers; one pair for his father, and a pair for his mother and sister.

He also told the man not to let his father know that he was buying him a pair. After asking Mr. Hull what size shoe his wife and daughter wore, and at the same time glancing down at Mr. Hull's foot, he went to the shelf and getting down a number of boxes, he picked out the sizes wanted, and after asking James if they would do, took them over to the wrapping counter, James following. He told James that they would cost him two dollars a pair. James gave him a ten dollar bill, and then went over to his father, and waited for the man to bring him the change. This he did, and when he counted out four dollars, Mr. Hull thought the two pair of slippers had cost six dollars. Mr. Hull told the shoe dealer to be sure and have the goods at the express office before twelve o'clock, as the express left for Jersey about that time.

They next found a dry goods store and bought some things that Mrs. Hull said they needed, and after getting these they went to the express office, which was in Murray street. Here they found the expressman, and giving him the bundle of dry-goods, asked him if he had received anything else. He told them there was a barrel of flour, and a lot of groceries, also a bundle. They told him there would be two more lots of goods, and he said he would wait for them.

James asked him what the express charges would be, and upon his replying, "Three dollars," paid him the money. James had only three dollars left of his money, but he felt very happy and light-hearted. After visiting a restaurant and getting a good dinner, the father and son started on their journey toward home well pleased with the day's experience.

After leaving the car at Union Hill they found that every one they met on the road seemed to know them, as they would call them by name, and our travelers recognized many faces that had been to the house during the past week. As they passed the country taverns they would be asked to stop and have something to drink. Mr. Hull always declined these invitations, but would stop and talk for a few minutes.

Upon passing one of them, whose proprietor had been more urgent than others, Mr. Hull said to James, "My boy, never go into such places; most of the men who keep these houses are unprincipled and do not hesitate to wreck the lives of the young men of our country. Their bar-rooms are breeding places for indolence and crime, and I would much rather see you and Frank buried than to know that either of you had become one of the habitual loungers, such as we see at every one of those taverns. They are the greatest curse to our country and nation. There is not a man who frequents them but what will tell you, if he will but speak honestly and from his heart, that he and his family would have been much better off if such places had never existed. See how they try to persuade us to enter; not because they are particularly well pleased to see us, but because they hope we will partake of the poison that they set before us until our reasoning faculties have become temporarily impaired and our money has flowed into their tills. I would like to live, my boy, to see these vile places swept off the face of the earth or out of our beloved country."

James never forgot his father's words and in after years, when he had grown to manhood, and would



enter one of these places, there seemed to be something so oppressive, something so disgusting and repulsive about it, that he was glad when he was out.

They were within a short distance of their home, and they saw that Frank and Harry had returned, for they could see the boat in the canal. Upon arriving at the house they saw Old Harry busy skinning the rats, while Frank was stretching the skins on the shingles. They had been successful, for James found upon counting, that they had brought home twenty-three rats.

Frank was eager to know what James had bought with the money, but as the express was coming up the road and was quite near the house, James told him to wait and he would see. The express was soon at the cottage, and all hands went to work carrying the bundles and packages into the house. The flour and groceries were put away before they proceeded to examine the other packages. The dry-goods were next taken care of by Mrs. Hull and Sadie; then the bundle from the shoe store was opened. The first thing that James picked out was the slippers and taking the pair that he had bought for his mother he handed them to her, saying:

"This, mother, is a present from Frank, Harry and myself."

His mother thanked them all and then James gave the other slippers to his father and Sadie. Mr. Hull was the most surprised of the three, for he did not know that James had purchased three pair, instead of two as he had supposed.

They set to work at once to see if the slippers would fit. The rubber boots were handed around, and when

James gave Old Harry the pair he had bought for him, the old man's eyes fairly twinkled with pleasure. He had been sitting in a corner of the room smiling at the surprise shown by the others. He thanked James for them and said that "dey was a mighty fine pair of boots and he guessed dat his ole feet would not feel at home in dem, as dey had neber had a pair of rubber boots on before."

James next opened the hat box and taking out a fine silk hat he placed it on the old man's head and said, "You must only wear this on Sundays and on special occasions." Harry said that such a hat was too good for him to wear, but when James brought forth the suit of clothes and handed them to the old man his eyes filled with tears, and he laughed and cried with joy.

"Oh! Massa James," he cried, "yer make dis ole heart ob mine so glad, yer is all de best folks Ise has eber seen. Ise neber dreamed of habbing such clothes."

They waited for the old man to calm himself and then Mr. Hull said, "Harry, you must not thank us for these things; they belong to you because you joined my boys in work and earned the money. We did not employ you agreeing to pay you any stated amount for your labor, but you said that you would help the boys, and you did. In helping them you have also helped yourself and we could not take all of the money and spend it for our own good. It would not have been right for us to do so. You need these clothes and hat to go to church in, and as you are a Christian you must admit that nothing is too good to wear at the Lord's service, or in His house."

"I guess yer is right, Mister Hull, but you see dat

the boys wanted a gun so bad dat Ise make up my mind dat we would have to earn de money for to buy it, and de good Lord blessed our work, for he made us prosperous, and Ise guess dat if we has spent some of de money to get clothes to wear to His house it is all right. Spose you keep dese tings till Ise has my room fixed, den Ise can make a place to keep dem in."

Sadie now said, "Harry, you let me take charge of them, and when you want them ask me and I will get them for you." To this Harry readily agreed, for he knew that they could not be in better hands.

James opened the box that contained the guns, and drew forth a leather case. "Why, father, we did not buy this. How did they come in here? They surely must have sent us the wrong box."

"I guess, my boy, that if you will but open the case, you will find your gun inside of it."

James unfastened the straps, and when the case was opened he not only found the gun but a powder and shot pouch, a kit of cleaning tools, caps, and a box of gun wads. There was also a note in the case from Mr. Sanger, explaining that he had sent the case because it had been made for the gun and he hoped that James would find use for it. The gun was put together and handed to Old Harry for inspection. The old man took the gun and after looking it over and trying it to his shoulder, handed it back and said:

"Ise doesn't know where yer got dat gun, but Ise seen dat gun before, for sure. Dat am de best gun in de county, for Ise hab shoot wif it."

James explained how he happened to buy this particular gun, not forgetting to mention the bargain

that he had made with Mr. Sanger. "Now, Harry, what do you know about that gun?"

"Well," said Harry, "one day Ise seed Jim Carter an' a gennam in de creek, an' dey was in poor luck, for dey had no ducks nor fish. Dey seed some fish in my boat, an' de gennam buyed dem. Jim asked de gennam if he could show me de gun, an' when he gennam said yes, he handed de gun to me. While Ise was zamming de gun Ise seed a duck flying very low, across de meadow. He was most too far 'way as Ise thought, but somehow de 'old boy' got in me, for Ise felt a powerful lot like trying dat gun, and Ise up and take aim, and suer nuff dat gun killed de duck. Well, if yer eber seed a surprised darkey, yer outer hab seed me. Jim Carter said dat was de best shot eber made on de ribber, for he picked dat duck up and it was clean killed. When Ise seed Massa James take dat gun out of de case Ise spected it was de same one dat killed dat duck, and when Ise spect a ting Ise pretty suer to be right."

He examined the smaller gun and declared it was a good one, but said that he would tell more about it after he had tried it. Frank, however, was highly delighted with it, for he had no trouble in handling it on account of its being so light.

It was a happy family that sat at Mr. Hull's tea table that evening. James and his father told of their experience in purchasing their goods in the city, and after they had put away their purchases and talked over their plans for the next day, they retired for the night.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE OLD DARKEY CREATES A SENSATION

At daybreak next morning Mr. Hull and James started to build a room in the out-house for Old Harry. They wished to complete the room by twelve o'clock, or by the time that Frank and Harry returned from the traps. They cut a hole in the back of the house into which they fitted a sash, then putting down a sill, they proceeded to close in the room. They also built a bunk in one corner of the room and a fine closet was put in another corner. They also placed locks and hooks on the closets and doors, and then turned the room over to Mrs. Hull and Sadie.

With the help of James, Sadie covered the floor with matting, and then prepared the old man's bed for him. Everything in the place was bright and clean, and they intended that it should be kept so.

The room was now practically ready for its tenant. They did not want the tenant to bring all his old traps from the cabin, much preferring that he would burn them as they intended to teach the old man to keep the room clean, neat and tidy. It was twelve o'clock, and as yet there was no sign of Frank and Harry returning, but they did not worry, for the old man had told them before leaving the house that morning that he proposed to find a place where they would have a chance to catch some mink and they might not be home very early.

Mr. Hull and James examined the plan that had been drawn for the scow and after getting their tools, James commenced to cut the boards for the bottom, while Mr.

Hull proceeded to shape the ends of the side pieces. The scow was to be twenty-four feet in length and twelve feet in width. It was to be built of the best seasoned white oak, one and one-half inches in thickness when dressed. It was dressed at the mill so that all the builders had to do was to cut the boards the proper length and width, then plane the edges smooth. So hard did the father and son work that they succeeded in getting the lumber all ready that afternoon. Frank and Old Harry had returned, but they had only brought eighteen rats with them. The old man said he had changed all the traps and had set them in another part of the meadow, near the swamp, where he had seen plenty of mink tracks.

"Ise know dat we hab two mink skins to-morrow, sure," he said. They spent the balance of the afternoon in skinning the rats, and in moving some of Harry's things. This they did with the boat, and everything was inspected by Sadie before she would permit it to be taken into the room. She made the old man thoroughly scrub his benches and chairs, for she said they would have to have a coat of paint when the scow was painted.

There was one box, or chest, that he would not open. He said it had not been opened for fifteen years, and he guessed that it was all right. It was noticed that this box was quite heavy, and the old man would not allow anyone to handle it but himself, and he put it under his bed.

After supper the boys and Harry decided they would go bobbing the following night and went out to catch the necessary worms with which to make the bobs.

James also reminded the old man that he would have to catch the two turtles he had promised to furnish the Hoboken Turtle Club, as he would be so busy working on the scow he would not have the time. Harry agreed to get the turtles the following day, when they went to look after the traps.

Mr. Hull and James worked steadily at the scow all the following week and when Saturday night came they decided she should be launched the following Monday.

The bobbing party had met with quite good success, so that they sent ten dollars worth of eels to market.

Another incident that happened which caused quite a sensation was the first time that Old Harry put on his new clothes. The first Sunday morning after the clothes had been purchased, James told Harry that he had better go with him and Frank and take a bath in the river. "We take a bath every Sunday morning," said James, "and as you are going to wear your fine clothes to-day, you had better come along."

To this Harry readily agreed and James went into the house for an extra piece of soap and a towel. Upon coming out he gave these to Harry, and the three friends started for the bathing place. Upon their return from the bath James asked Sadie for the old man's clothes, and upon receiving them carried them to Old Harry's room. He gave them to Harry, telling him that if he wanted any help in fixing his collar to call on him.

The two boys proceeded to get ready for church as they wanted to go with the old man. When James was ready he came out to look for Harry, as he suspected that the old man would experience trouble in getting

his things on just right. He went to Harry's room and said:

"Are you ready, Harry?"

"Oh! Massa James, you had better come in, Ise in a peck of trouble."

James heard the bolt slide back, and he entered the room and found that the old man had succeeded in putting on the shirt, but on account of the buttons being so small he could not get it buttoned. James soon had the shirt properly buttoned; he adjusted the collar and necktie for him, also the suspenders, so as to make the trousers the right length. He told him to put on his vest and coat, as he wished to see how they fitted him. James at last got the old man ready, and then told him they did not have much time to spare, unless he wished to be late, "but Harry, you must go into the house and look at yourself in the glass, you don't know what a change these clothes have made in your appearance."

The old man did not realize what a change had been made, until he saw himself reflected in the looking glass. Then he saw he was dressed in the latest style clothes, and that he also looked twenty years younger. He placed the hat on one side of his head. "You must not wear it that way, Harry," said James, "only rowdies wear high hats that way." The old man immediately placed the hat straight and was never seen to put it on in that manner again. As they went out of the house and down the road, it was noticed that the old darkey walked much quicker and more erect than usual. The boys told him the clothes fitted him perfectly, and that they felt proud of him, as indeed they did.



When they entered the church all eyes were centered on the old man, and so erect did he walk that at first most of the congregation did not recognize him. It did not take them a great while to see what had changed his appearance, and after the service was over, a good many gathered about the old man and congratulated him on the improvement. He told them that it was all "de work ob doze boys, and dat dey was taking pretty good care ob him," but everybody knew the history of the turtle and fish and they were aware that the old man had received no more than he deserved.

When they were on their way home and had reached the middle of the bridge (now called Banta's Bridge), the old man stopped and said:

"Boys, yous is de only friends dat Ise has eber had; you tink nuffing was too good for dis old darkey. You have made my old heart glad, and Ise neber spected to lib to see dis day." The tears were now running down the old man's face, and he took the boys by the hand and said, that he was going to try and help them more than ever, and the boys knew that he would keep his word.

So faithfully did the old man attend to the traps, while James was helping his father build the scow, that he caught one hundred and ten muskrats and six mink.

The scow was painted and ready to be put into the water, but just how to get it there Mr. Hull did not know. He finally decided to make a cradle, or skid, and then work it under the centre of the scow. This they did by prying up the ends of the scow, and then placing blocks under them; the scow was suspended at both ends and the middle left clear.

They built a small incline, or trestle, using two wide boards for a track. As the bank of the creek was five feet away from one end of the scow, they were compelled to make this trestle about twenty-five feet in length, and by nailing small strips on the sides of the track they formed a flange that would prevent the skids from running off.

The track and the bottom of the skids were thoroughly greased with soft soap that had been prepared by Mrs. Hull and Sadie. The skids were placed on the track under the scow, were set perfectly straight, and blocked or fastened, so that they could not shift when the weight came upon them. A line was attached to the rear of the scow and then fastened to a post, so as to make sure that she would not start before they were ready to have her do so. She was now lowered on the skids, the blocking all removed, and the boat was ready to slide into the water. The tide was not yet at its height and they were obliged to wait a full hour before Mr. Hull said that they would send her off.

The task of naming this boat had been given to Sadie, and when her father said it was time, she walked up to the boat with a bottle of water in her hand, and breaking the bottle by striking it against the scow, said, "I christen thee 'The Meadow Lark.'" Mr. Hull had unfastened the rope and had placed a pry under the rear end.

As Sadie finished speaking, he jarred the boat by pressing down on the pry and it began to move toward the water. So easily, silently, and gracefully did she start that the boys, and even Old Harry, cheered as the scow entered the water.

The boys ran to the row boat and jumping in, were soon pulling toward the scow, which had drifted up the creek. They had a rope made fast to it, and began towing it inshore and back to its launching place, where they tied it to a stake.

The launching had been a perfect success in every way and after the boys had picked up the skid, or cradle, they went ashore and commenced to remove the trestle and pile it away. Mr. Hull decided to make a double bottom to the boat. He said that it would make her stiffer, stronger and less liable to leakage. After working two days more on the scow he considered her finished and ready for the purpose for which she was built.

The Hulls had been in their country home three months, it now being the first of July. Old Harry said it was the best time to cut the grass, so they sharpened their scythes and prepared them for use on the following day. Mr. Hull told the old man that he would have to instruct both James and himself how to use the scythe, for neither of them had any experience at that kind of work. Harry replied that he was going to cut his share of the grass, and guessed he could show them how to do it. The next morning a boat load of men, scythes, forks and baskets, could have been seen going down the river toward the unclaimed lands. This boat contained our two boys, their father, and their friend, Old Harry. They had been rowing about two hours, when the old darkey shot the bow of the boat into a small creek. The water in this creek seemed to be unusually deep, and its banks were perpendicular, not sloping as were the banks of other creeks. The

creek itself flowed through the centre of the unclaimed district.

About one hundred yards from the mouth of this creek the boat drew alongside of the bank and Harry pointed out to Mr. Hull why he had selected this place to land. Here, he said, the water was very deep, and the scow could be loaded, no matter whether the tide was in or out.

The old man set his scythe in its stick; telling the others to remain in the boat for a few minutes he stepped out and commenced to cut away the reeds close to the edge of the bank. He soon had a place cleared and the things were handed out of the boat. Harry now adjusted the other scythes to their sticks and said:

"You just watch me cut out and back and Ise will 'splain how it's done." He removed all his clothing except his trousers and undershirt, and taking his scythe he commenced to cut a swath in the grass, at a right angle with the creek.

He cut out quite a distance and cut a swath on his return throwing this swath on top of the other. Mr. Hull noticed that this man was an artist at this kind of work, for the old man stood erect and his body swayed back and forth with the precision of an automatic machine. The stubble that was left was as even in height as if it had been cut with a mowing machine, and not a blade of grass was left standing in the space that the old darkey had cut over.

Mr. Hull tried it, but found it much more difficult than he had expected; it was also harder work than he had bargained for, but with Old Harry to instruct him he at last succeeded in getting the knack of how

to cut clean, and he found that he was doing it with much less effort.

The old man now gave his attention to James, and after working with him for fifteen minutes, James found that he could get along quite nicely. They all worked together and the grass began to fall rapidly. After working steadily for two hours, Harry declared that he and Frank would have to go look after the traps. He advised James and his father to take a rest, for, he said, "they would find themselves very sore and stiff the following day." They acted on the old fellow's advice, but before he returned they were up and at it again. When Harry returned he also started in and by twelve o'clock, they had cut over a large area of ground. They had lunch and Mr. Hull asked Harry what he thought of the grass, he replied "dat de grass was fine enuf for race horses to eat."

Frank had nothing to do as he was too small to use a scythe, and he would have to wait for the grass to dry before he could begin to shake it up, but he was told that after that day he would not complain on account of being idle. He had, however, brought his gun with him, and had taken the boat and gone off by himself. The mowers had heard the report of the gun, and had seen a flock of ducks rise out of the meadow, they also saw one fall from the flock as the second barrel was discharged. They again heard him make several other shots, but for some time they had not heard anything of him. James had just said, "I wonder what has become of Frank," when they were startled by the report of a gun.



## CHAPTER X

### DEATH OF PARENTS, AND PLANNING TO BUILD THE HOME AFLOAT

So close to the mowers had the gun been discharged that it made them all jump to their feet. They heard Frank's voice saying, "I've got him."

"Yes," said his father, "and you nearly got us at the same time, for I heard the shot cut through the reeds."

"No, no, father," said Frank, "I saw where you all were sitting, and I was careful. But isn't this a fine fellow?" and Frank held up to their view a fine mink that he lifted out of the water. "I saw you all sitting down eating your lunch and I thought that I would see how close I could get to you before you would see me, so I let the boat drift with the tide. While watching you, I caught sight of this fellow climbing up the bank, as if he wanted to see what was going on, and I knocked him over. This makes the third mink that I have shot this morning. I saw several more but they were too quick for me."

"But where are all your ducks? We saw you kill one."

"Yes," said Frank, "I have got five of them, but the one you saw fall, I did not get, for I could not find it."

"How did you manage to get within shot of these fellows, Frank?"

"Well," replied the boy, "I heard them long before I could get anywhere near them, and I let the boat drift. I knew that I was getting nearer to them all the time, but I could not see them; finally, I saw some feathers floating on the water at the mouth of a small ditch, and I concluded they were in that ditch, and sure enough

when I got opposite this ditch there they were. I tell you I did not have much time to aim for they saw me almost as soon as I saw them, and by the time I got the gun to my shoulder they were off in a bunch. Their wings were extended, and I found that I had broken their wings, and what a job it was trying to gather them. They would dive under the water and if they had been out in the large creek I would have had to shoot them again. One fellow was too nimble for me, so I gave him another dose of shot, the other I struck on the head with an oar. When I fired the other barrel, I could not see where the duck fell, and by the time I had gathered these fellows, all idea of just where to look for that one was gone, although I tried to find it."

"You have done a good morning's work," said his father, "and now come and get something to eat."

"Yes," chimed in Old Harry, "dat boy has an eye like an eagle; yer ought to see him shoot wiff dat ole musket ob mine. Now, massa Jim," said Harry, "jus yer skin dose rats and mink and Ise will be back in a minute to help yer," and the old man stepped into the boat and tossed the rats out on the bank, then taking the boat he rowed away.

"Where is he going, boy?" said Mr. Hull.

"Why, after the duck Frank shot," replied James, "and I bet he gets it, too." Sure enough in about twenty minutes the old man returned with the duck.

"How did you know where to find that duck, Harry?" asked Mr. Hull.

"Ise seed where he fall and Ise knowed he was dead by de way he fall."

Upon examining the bird they found that the



charge of shot had struck it under the wing, thus piercing the heart. Harry told them that these ducks bred in the swamp back of the meadow, but if they would wait and not shoot until the fall of the year, they would have fine sport, for at that season of the year other ducks on their way South would stop to feed and rest. Then they would have all the shooting they wanted. It was best, he said, not to kill off the native ducks, for if left alone they would attract the strange ones.

As the national holiday (Fourth of July) was now at hand, and Mr. Hull being a thorough patriot, he decided the day should be celebrated by his family in a proper manner. On the morning of the third of July, although he was not feeling well, he took the early train to the city, where he purchased a good supply of fireworks, to be used on the evening of the Fourth. His boys were of that age the fire cracker had lost some of its charm, and he only bought a few packs, to be used as sandwiches (as he expressed it) while they were setting off the fireworks.

The boys spent the day in trying their guns. They would load each of the guns with the same quantity of powder and shot. They placed a tin pail on the top of a post, then fired at it from different distances. The gun James bought from Mr. Sanger soon proved its superiority, for at a distance of seventy yards it would drive the shot through the tin, while the shot fired from Frank's gun would only indent it. In this manner the boys managed to make considerable noise during the day, and when evening came the whole family sat on the stoop and enjoyed the display of fireworks.

Mr. Hull found that the task that he had set

for himself was more than his strength would permit. It was evident that his constitution was broken and he could not stand the work, for the next day he was confined to his bed and a doctor was called in. The doctor did not say much to the family, but it was noticed that he called Old Harry on one side and had a long talk with him. He ordered that Mr. Hull should be kept in bed and as quiet as possible.

The boys and Harry worked at the hay and attended to the traps, but there was a sad expression on their faces, for the old man had, in a very gentle way, told them what the doctor said; that Mr. Hull could not live more than two months. The boys told Sadie but no one would tell the mother, for they knew it would kill her.

The work of getting the hay from the meadow to the house was commenced. They towed the scow down, when the tide was running out, and brought it back loaded with an incoming tide. They obtained permission from Mr. Knapp to use as much of the land between the creek and the road, for storage purposes, as they wished. They succeeded in getting eight large stacks of hay stored on this land, when the crisis in Mr. Hull's illness came. Mr. and Mrs. Knapp had been most kind to the stricken family, and Mr. Knapp and his daughter, Fannie, were present when he died. Just before he breathed his last, he called his family to him, and as the boys and Sadie stood at his bedside, with tears streaming down their faces, he said:

"My children, both your mother and myself will only be with you a short time. I have heard the call, and I know that my time has come. Before another sun

riser I shall meet my Savior, who stands with outstretched hands to receive me. ('Bress the good Lord for dat,' said Harry, who stood at the foot of the bed.) I want you my children to be honest, truthful and kind to each other. Shun the company of men with evil ways, or young men who spend their time in idleness. I do not want you to think it is not right that we should both be taken from you. God knows what is best, and his way is not our way. James, you are the oldest, and much will depend upon you how your brother and sister get along in this world. Guide them gently over the rough places in this life, always remembering to ask Our Heavenly Father's help,—for without that you can do nothing. You have all been good children; no parents were ever blessed with better children than you have been. Remember that we shall see you from above."

Here Mr. Hull stopped and seeing Old Harry, said: "Harry, I have not much time left but I must say a few words to you. Thank Mr. and Mrs. Knapp for their kindness to us, and, my old friend, I believe that God has sent you to be an earthly friend to my family. It is a comfort to me to know there is one who will look after them in the future as he has done in the past. I thank you, Harry, and God will reward you." As Mr. Hull uttered these words a change was seen to come over him. Mr. Knapp drew the boys from the room, while his daughter tried to comfort Sadie.

Mrs. Hull had kept up bravely until two weeks before her husband's death. She had then given up, and insisted upon being placed in the same bed with him. The children all kissed her when they came into the

room, but so anxious had they been to catch every word their father said, that they did not notice the change come over their mother. The moment Mr. Knapp looked at the two patients, he saw that they had both passed away. He sent for his wife, and as the good woman came into the house, she gathered Sadie in her arms.

The minister and his wife also came. He had been to the house every day during the past two weeks and the whole family had learned to love him.

No one, unless they have experienced just such a bereavement, can imagine what the grief of the children was and how they suffered.

Mr. Knapp took charge of everything. He made all the arrangements for the funeral. He bought a plot in the churchyard and then taking both boys to the city fitted them out with clothes, hats and shoes. He told them they could pay him back when they sold their rat skins. Mr. Knapp knew they had a great many skins, but when they told him they had over fifteen hundred muskrat, and twenty-five mink skins in the attic, it almost took his breath away. He saw that these boys were made of the right kind of metal, and he decided to help them all he could.

"I'll tell you boys, I want to give my wife and daughter a nice Christmas present, and if you will save me enough of the mink skins, I will give you ten dollars a piece for them and when I get them made up, you can give me enough skins to make your sister Sadie a cloak, for you have one of the best sisters in the world."

The boys were delighted, and they assured Mr. Knapp that he should have the first pick of the skins.

He also told them he had a lot of lazy horses in his stable, and if at any time they wanted to use a horse and wagon to call on him and they could have them. In this manner he tried to keep their thoughts away from their sorrow.

Mrs. Knapp and the minister's wife, took charge of the house until after the funeral. They provided Sadie with proper mourning apparel, and comforted her in every way they could. The funeral was largely attended, for the bereavement of the family had spread throughout the county.

We will not trouble our readers with the details of the burial, but state that for several days after the funeral the boys could not work. Old Harry attended to the traps, and it was while he was away, and the two boys were sitting on the stoop waiting for him to return, that the question which forms the first sentence of this work was asked.

"I will tell you my plan, Frank; it is this: This place can never seem like home to any of us again, and we have got to find another home. Sadie cannot be left alone while we are at work, and as our work is in the meadows, or on the river, we will take her with us."

"How are you going to do that?" said Frank, "she would not want to go out with us every day."

"Well, Frank, do you see that scow? My idea is to build a floating home on that scow. We can put a two-story house on it, that will be large enough for us all, and then we can go anywhere on this river that suits us."

Frank clapped his hands with delight, and said, "Oh, won't that be fine!"

Sadie had heard them talking, and she came out of the house and seeing a pleased look upon their faces asked them what had happened. They soon told her of the plan, and then asked her what she thought of it. She said that it was the best thing they could do, for the place would never seem like home to her again. "We would only need to stay in our floating home two or three years, and by that time you boys will have made money enough to buy or build a fine home somewhere on shore." James was pleased to find that both his brother and sister approved of his plan, but said, "Well, I am glad you agree with me, but we must consult Old Harry and Mr. Knapp; they are our two best friends, and have been very kind to us; we will do nothing before we have a talk with them. Here comes Mr. and Mrs. Knapp and Fannie; we will speak to them at once."

As the carriage drew up to the gate all three of our friends rushed out to welcome them. Mr. Knapp observed that their faces were brighter than usual, and said:

"Well, James, what has happened; have you caught another large turtle?"

"Oh, no," replied James, "we have been only trying to look into the future and we think we have hit upon a plan that will be to our advantage. We had just decided to consult you in the matter when we saw you driving toward the house."

"Well, mother," said Mr. Knapp, addressing his wife, "suppose we all go sit on the stoop and talk this over."

Mrs. Knapp was out of the wagon by the time her husband had finished the sentence, and they were soon all seated on the stoop.

"Now let us hear your plan, James," said Mr. Knapp.

James told what he had to say, and both Mr. and Mrs. Knapp looked pained.

"Well, James, we had a plan to propose, but I can see that ours will not do. You have decided to remain together, while our plan would necessitate Sadie living with us, while you two boys were at work in the city. I find," continued Mr. Knapp, "that you are much further advanced in your schooling than the children living out here. You have had the advantage of the public schools of the city, and if you and Frank would like positions with some business house in the city, I think that I could find places for you."

Mrs. Knapp and Fannie pleaded with Sadie to come and live with them, but Sadie replied that her place was with her brothers. They all thanked Mr. and Mrs. Knapp, and when their kind friends offered to give them the house they were living in it brought tears to their eyes. James explained why they could not accept it and why they could not live there.

Mr. Knapp saw that it was better for the present time to let them have their own way, and said, as long as they had decided to make the change, he would do all he could to help them. "I have a carpenter working for me by the week, James, and as I have not much for him to do just now, we will have him help you build this house. Have you a working plan of the house drawn?"

James replied he had not had time to make one as he had only thought of building the house that morning.

"Well, we will make the plan at once," said Mr. Knapp, "and then we can order the lumber this afternoon and commence building the house tomorrow morning."

James went into the house, and in a few minutes returned with his father's drawing board, tools, and paper. He also found the plan his father had made of the scow, and in about one hour, from the time he brought the paper and board, the plan was completed.

The plan showed a two-story house built on the scow. The first story did not extend the full length of the scow, but was sixteen feet long. The second story was twenty-four feet long, and extended the full length of the scow. The floor of the second story thus forming a canopy over the portion of the deck that was not occupied by the first story. The entrance to the house was through a door cut into the end, facing this deck space. This deck space was eight feet in length. Two pillars, or uprights, standing on the very corners of this deck, supported the top story. A balcony was to be built on the end of the second story.



## CHAPTER XI

### A GOOD DAY'S SPORT SHOOTING RAIL BIRDS

The house was to have sixteen windows in it, four on each side of the top story and three on each side of the first floor.

The interior of the house was as follows:—The first floor had a dining room and a kitchen, the latter being four feet in width, by twelve feet in length; the dining room was twelve feet long by twelve feet in width. The ceilings on this floor were eight feet in height, this was owing to the floor being laid two feet below the level of the deck. Under this deck they proposed to build a tank, that would hold about two hundred and fifty gallons of fresh water. The balance of space under the deck was to be used for storage purposes.

The second story consisted of four rooms, three bed rooms and a parlor. The parlor was to be in the front of the house, its dimensions were twelve feet by eight feet. Sadie's bed room next to the parlor, the boys' room next to hers. These two rooms were twelve feet in length and six feet in width. Old Harry's room came next, it being the last and rear room on this floor; it was the same size as the kitchen. The ceilings of these rooms were seven feet in height.

James, as well as the rest of the family, were delighted with the sketch of their future home, for it seemed to relieve them, and cause them to bear their sorrow with better grace.

Mr. Knapp said that they had better make a number of troughs and fasten them to the bottom of the scow; these should be filled with stones, so as to act

as ballast. "As your scow is four feet deep, you still have two feet under your floor," he said, "and I advise you to divide this space into bins, and have a trap door in the floor over each bin. We have not provided for any chimneys."

James said that he thought earthen pipes would answer.

"A good idea, James," replied Mr. Knapp, "we can use cement drain pipe, cement the joints together, then enclose each chimney with a board casing; this will make them stiff and firm. Where you wish to connect the stove pipe, we can put in a tee, or a length of pipe with a side outlet."

Harry was seen approaching the house. So interested had they all been in the plans of the house, that they did not see the boat come into the canal. After inquiring what he had caught, and learning that he had brought home eighteen rats and three minks, they told him about their plan. They also showed him a sketch of the house-boat.

The old man was well pleased with everything, and seemed to think that it was the proper thing to do.

Mr. Knapp told James to call at his house after dinner and they would drive to Hoboken and order the lumber.

James replied that he would have to sell some of the skins to pay for it, first, as they only had a little over one hundred dollars on hand.

"I will fix that part of the business with the lumberman, there will be no trouble on that score," said Mr. Knapp. "I will be ready by one o'clock," said their good friend, as they got into the carriage to go home.

After the Hull family were through their dinner, James asked the old darkey if he did not think they had better sell the skins, and not be compelled to move them when they went to live in the house-boat, "besides, Harry, you know we will need a lot of money to buy everything that we need."

Harry replied that it was just about as good a time as any, as the buyers would want to get the skins ready for the winter trade.

James kept his appointment with Mr. Knapp, and they were soon on their way to Hoboken.

While they were driving along James told his friend about his desire to turn the skins into money. He told him that he did not like to owe any one a dollar. He would much rather sell the skins and hay, and when they moved into their new home they could do so feeling that it was all paid for.

Mr. Knapp said, "That is right, my boy; 'pay as you go' is a good motto in this life, and if carried out by everybody, it would save a lot of trouble. I will find you a purchaser for those skins tomorrow when I go to the city. A friend of mine is a manufacturer of furs, and I know that he will be glad to get such a fine lot of skins as you have; all of them are caught in traps I believe. He told me that most of the skins they received now were injured by the animal having been shot. How many skins have you, James?"

"We have about two thousand rat skins," said James. "We will not sell the mink skins as you have first claim on them."

They arrived at the lumber yard and James was introduced to the proprietor.

The plan was brought out and they figured out the amount of material that would be required. This the lumberman promised to deliver early the next morning. He agreed to load the two wagons that afternoon, so that they would get an early start.

As this man also kept a hardware and paint store, they purchased what they required of these things.

Mr. Knapp inquired of the man how many horses he had; when told he had twelve, Mr. Knapp whistled, and exclaimed:

"Why, these fellows must get away with a lot of hay!"

"I guess they do! Do you know of any one who has a good lot of hay to sell?"

"I have," exclaimed James, "and I will sell it cheap; come out tomorrow morning and have a look at it."

This the man promised to do, and James, with his friend, was soon on their way home, where they arrived at four o'clock.

So anxious was James to commence work on the house that he started that very afternoon to tear down the out-house. This material he purposed to use in constructing the bins and ballast boxes in the bottom of the scow. As fast as James would knock the boards loose Frank and Harry would carry them aboard the boat.

Early the next morning the carpenter Mr. Knapp spoke of was on hand. He and James were soon at work making the bins. They had nearly completed these when the lumberman arrived.

Mr. Haswill, the lumberman, said that he would have a look at the hay while the lumber was being unloaded.

After examining the hay, and giving some of it to his horses to see if they would like it, he inquired of James what he wanted for the lot.

James replied that there was about thirty-two tons of it, and he could have the lot for one hundred and sixty dollars. Mr. Haswill accepted the offer at once, and taking the bill for the lumber out of his pocket he credited the bill with that amount. He told James that he himself did not have use for all the hay, but he had a number of friends who would be glad to take what he could not use.

The bill for the lumber amounted to three hundred dollars. This left a balance due Mr. Haswill of one hundred and forty dollars, which James paid when he received the money for the skins.

It was now the first of September, and the boys heard plenty of shooting in the meadow. Upon inquiring of Old Harry the meaning of it, they were informed that it was the season for rail birds.

James told the old man that he would like to try his gun, as he had had no chance to use it before. Harry told him that they could go out early in the morning, as the tide was then at its height. He explained that the boat would have to be shoved over the meadow and that he would make a shoving pole that afternoon so as to have it ready for use. Frank was sent to the village to purchase some number twelve shot, as this is the size used in shooting these birds.

English Creek is a favorite feeding ground for them, and our shooting party did not have far to go before they found plenty of the game they were looking for.

This bird is a species of snipe. It has a long bill, a

short, stubby tail and when it flies its legs hang straight down and are not drawn up close to the body as is the case with most other birds. It makes its appearance on the meadows about the third week in August, and disappears the second or third week in September. No one has ever seen them come or go, and it is a mystery how they migrate to and from this section without being seen. They are very numerous, for it is considered poor sport when a shooting party (which consists of one man to do the shooting and one man to do the shoving) does not kill from seventy to one hundred of them at one tide.

At daybreak the next morning our friends were on the shooting ground. James found that it was fine sport, for he could knock over the birds as fast as he could unload and reload his piece. After one hour's sport they returned to the house with seventy-five birds to their credit.

The work of building the house was pushed forward. As each piece of the frame was prepared Frank and Old Harry would carry it aboard the scow. They would place it in such a position that it could be easily raised to its proper place. Such good progress did James and his helper make, that by six o'clock the frame was completed, ready for erection.

Fannie Knapp had called during the afternoon, as was her usual custom ever since the family bereavement. A strong attachment had been formed between the two girls, and they were often seen driving together, for Fannie would call with her pony and phaeton, and the girls would go for a drive. The strain upon Sadie during the past two weeks had been very great. From

a strong, lively young girl, she had become a quiet, pale young woman, and it was plain to be seen that unless something was done, this young girl would soon find a resting place with her father and mother. Mr. and Mrs. Knapp had noted the change in Sadie. They had decided to allow their daughter to be in her company as much as possible. At first Sadie declined to take the drives when Fannie would ask her, but James was appealed to by Mr. Knapp, who called the boy's attention to his sister's condition.

One evening after Frank and Old Harry had gone to bed, James and Sadie were sitting alone. The brother saw that his sister's eyes were filled with tears. He moved his chair close beside her, and drawing her head down on his shoulder kissed her forehead. Sadie burst into tears and cried as if her heart would break. After she had become somewhat composed James said: "Now, my sister, let us talk things over together. Do you not think it wrong for us to grieve so much over our loss? I know that we boys are outside, and our attention is drawn to other things, but with you it is different. You are in the house all the time, and are constantly reminded of our parents by seeing things that belonged to them. You must go out with Fannie when she asks you. I heard you decline the invitation she gave you today. Was it because you were afraid that something would be neglected if you did go? It is better, Sadie, for you to neglect something than for you to grieve yourself sick. Oh! Sadie, what would Frank and I do if you were taken sick? We will never forget our father and mother, but do you think it will please them to see us worry and grieve so after them?

You know that father said he would see us from above, and let us try to do what would please them. I am not scolding you, sister, but I see that the roses have gone from these cheeks and I want to see them return. We promised father that we would remain together and not grieve too much or think that it was not right that they should both be taken from us. Let us kneel down and ask our Heavenly Father to help us."

James knelt down, and with Sadie at his side, he offered up a prayer to God, asking for the help, strength and blessing that he felt they were so much in need of. When James had finished he was surprised to hear the voice of Old Harry saying, "Amen." The old man now stepped into the room, and coming up to where the brother and sister were still kneeling, said:

"You must scuse me, Massa Jim, but Ise heard Miss Sadie in trouble, and Ise could not rest; Ise heard what you says to her and Ise knowed dat the good Lord has answered your prayer for Ise seed it in Miss Sadie's face." Sadie said that a great weight had been lifted from off her heart. She threw her arms about her brother's neck and after kissing him went to bed feeling happier and better contented than at any time since before the death of her parents.

After the burial of Mr. and Mrs. Hull the boys had requested the old darkey to sleep in the house. They had installed him in their room, while they occupied the room that was previously used by their parents. This is how the old man happened to be in the house and witness the scene that we just mentioned.

Sadie Hull went about her work the following day



with a lighter heart. She had found the words in the good book to be true: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps. 34:18.

When Fannie called again to see her friend, James was the first to greet her. He assisted her to alight from the carriage, and she seemed willing to have him help her. We will have to excuse our young hero if it took him a little longer than usual to tie the pony, considering there was a pretty young lady talking to him at the time. The task of tying the horse was at last accomplished and as the two walked toward the house Sadie opened the door to receive them. Fannie no sooner caught a glimpse of Sadie's face than she exclaimed:

"Well, Sadie, you look as if you would enjoy a ride today; come, get your things on and we will start."

These drives soon brought the roses back to Sadie's cheeks, and as Fannie alighted from the carriage that afternoon she informed James that her father had gone to the city to see about finding a purchaser for the skins.

"You must have some way of charming muskrats to have secured such a large number of them," said Fannie.

"All the credit belongs to Old Harry," said James; "you know he is an expert at the business."

"Yes," replied his fair listener, "I also know that he was not very expert before James Hull came around."

Sadie had told her friend how James had helped to comfort her and this had raised our hero very high in the estimation of this young lady.



## CHAPTER XII

### SALE OF THE SKINS AND THEFT OF THE PROCEEDS

Mr. Knapp attended to his own business upon reaching the city, and then devoted his time to finding out the value of such skins as our boys had to sell. He visited six or seven manufacturers of furs, and when he told them the number of skins he had to sell, also that they were trapped skins, they offered him forty dollars per hundred for them. These offers he declined, for he thought his friend would give more for them.

He finally called at his friend's warerooms, and was fortunate enough to find him in. He had a clerk take his card into a private office. In a few minutes the door of this office opened, and a voice cried out, "Hello, Frank, come in, you are good for sore eyes, we don't see much of you since you moved to Jersey."

Mr. Knapp entered the office, and as he did so his friend, whose name was Chapin, said, "I want to introduce you, Frank, to my partner—Mr. Knapp, Mr. Sanger; be seated, gentlemen."

Mr. Chapin touched a bell that was on his desk, and a darkey stepped into the room. "Joe, here is my key, get out a C. P. and be quick about it," he said, addressing the darkey. A bottle of champagne, a small table and glasses, soon made their appearance. The glasses were filled and Joe made his exit.

"Charlie," said Mr. Chapin addressing his partner. "Frank here is an old schoolmate of mine, and it is about three years since I have seen him; why don't you stop in and see a fellow when you come into the city, Frank?"

Mr. Knapp replied that he never had much time to make friendly calls when he did come in town, which was only two or three times in a year, "but I have taken the opportunity today of combining business with pleasure, so let us talk business for a while. You are both interested," said Mr. Knapp, looking first at one partner and then at the other. "I have a lot of mink skins that I want made into three cloaks, and I want you to make them up for me. I do not intend to pay you one cent for doing it. Will you do it?" "Certainly we will do it," replied his friend, at the same time giving his partner a wink. "All right," said Mr. Knapp, "that's a bargain. Now I want to know what you are paying for trapped muskrat skins."

"We are paying forty dollars per hundred for what we can get, but we are very short this year. Some of our buyers have been very slow, and have not been on the ground soon enough," replied his friend.

"Well," said Mr. Knapp, "I know where there are two thousand skins that you can buy."

"Ah!" exclaimed his friend, "you are the same old Frank. I knew you had something up your sleeve when you asked us to make those cloaks, for I never knew you to ask or to receive a favor without repaying it. Where are these skins you speak of?"

Mr. Knapp told them who owned the skins. He had hardly mentioned the name of Hull, when Mr. Sanger, jumping to his feet, exclaimed, "Why, that is the boy to whom I sold my gun. I was about to make arrangements to go up there for two or three days' shooting. Do you think the Hulls could accommodate me? I dislike so much going to those taverns."

"Why not come home with me?" replied Mr. Knapp. "I will meet you on the train that leaves the depot at six o'clock."

Mr. Knapp now insisted that his friend's partner should stay at his house while he was on his shooting trip. He also said that he would be pleased to have him bring his wife with him.

Mr. Sanger thanked him and said that he would consult with his wife; perhaps they might pay him a visit the following day.

After spending about two hours more with his friends, in which time he gave them a complete history of the Hull family from the time that they had rented the house, he started for his home well pleased with his day's experience.

The work of raising the frame on the scow was commenced the next morning. The four corner posts were placed in position—in fact, the whole frame was soon put together and properly braced. This frame was made of as light material as possible, but the strength was obtained by bracing.

During the day Mr. Sanger and his wife made their appearance at Mr. Knapp's. So anxious was he to secure the skins, that the two gentlemen paid the boys a visit that afternoon, and after examining the skins, Mr. Sanger drew from his pocket a roll of bills. He counted out eight hundred dollars and handed it to James, saying: "Here is eight hundred dollars, my boy, which will pay you for two thousand skins. You may send us all that you have. If we find, upon receiving them, there are more than that number, we will forward the balance due you by express. I would like to

have you pack these goods this afternoon and ship them to us tomorrow, for we are greatly in need of them. You may also send us the mink skins, and if there are any of these left over, after we have filled Mr. Knapp's order, we will remit for them also."

James thanked him, then invited them into the house. After introducing Mr. Sanger to his sister, he proceeded to count the money. Upon finding it correct, he made out a receipt, which he handed to Mr. Sanger, having disposed of the money, by giving it to Sadie, remarking, as he did so, that she was their banker.

The gentlemen were about to take their departure when James said: "Both of you gentlemen have been very kind to us and we would like to repay you in some way. If you have made no other arrangements, and will call this afternoon about five o'clock, we will guarantee to give you two hours of fine sport shooting rail birds."

"That is just what I came out here for," replied Mr. Sanger. "You can count upon me, for I have brought my gun with me. It is in the carriage and I am going to remain with you until the tide is high enough for us to start."

Mr. Knapp at first declined the invitation, stating that he did not know anything about shooting, but James told him that he could use Frank's gun, and that Mr. Sanger would show him how to shoot while they were waiting for the tide to rise.

The arrangements for the afternoon's sport were as follows: Mr. Sanger and Harry were to go out in the old man's boat, while Mr. Knapp and James would use the boy's boat. Both occupants of the first mentioned

boat were experts, and their boat being much smaller, as well as lighter, it could be handled to better advantage in the meadow. This, and the inexperience of Mr. Knapp, led the whole party to believe that the second boat would not be very successful.

All hands were called from work on the scow and they soon had the skins counted, packed and boxed for shipment. Mr. Knapp had been to his house but had returned for the lessons that Mr. Sanger had promised to give him. Under the tuition of his friend he made rapid progress, and was soon able to hit a block of wood as it was thrown in the air.

Old Harry and James had a consultation before they started, and it was decided to give James the easiest ground to work over, on account of the large boat that he had. This ground was also the best feeding place in the meadow for the birds.

The two boats started. James and his partner were soon on the shooting ground. Mr. Knapp proved a better marksman than was expected. He rarely missed his bird when he shot, but was a little slow. A great many birds would get into the reeds and out of sight before he could get the gun to his shoulder. This fault he soon corrected and James had the pleasure of seeing his friend develop into a first-class marksman. The other boat had gone about a mile up the creek before the old man turned the bow of the boat toward the meadow. They had been having what Mr. Sanger considered good sport, for he had bagged thirty birds and had not missed a shot, but Old Harry shook his head, at the same time saying "dat dey was not enuff."

"What do you mean, Harry, by saying that; you have

done more work and covered more ground in the one hour we have been shooting than any other man would have done in two hours. You are the best man I have ever had at this kind of work."

"Ise knowed that Massa Sanger, but we is behind de udder boat."

"How do you know that, my man? There are other boats in this meadow, and all the shooting you have heard has not been that of our friends."

"Ise knowed de bark of dat gun, Massa Sanger, and Ise feel dat dey has more birds as we has. Ise knowed where dere is a little spot of 'bout five acres of wild oats; we'll go there before it gets dark." The old man told the shooter to be seated and they would go to this place.

In the meantime James and Mr. Knapp had been having fine sport. So plentiful did they find the birds that Mr. Knapp was able to get a double shot most all the time. It was this double shooting that worried Old Harry, for he knew that when the first barrel was discharged the report made by it would scare up another bird, if one happened to be close to the boat. This would give the sportsman a chance to use his second barrel.

After enjoying the sport for two hours and a half, both boats returned to the house. Mr. Sanger had succeeded in killing five more birds than Mr. Knapp; the score being seventy-five to eighty. Mr. Sanger gave the old man five dollars for the work that he had performed. He also engaged him to take him out on the following day. Mr. Knapp offered to pay James a like amount, but the young man refused to take the



money, and said that it would give him pleasure to go with him again.

When Old Harry had returned from the morning shoot the following day, he and Frank attended to the traps. They returned in time to give Mr. Sanger a few hours' shooting on the afternoon tide. James remained at home that day to attend to the shipping of the skins, and also to push forward the work on the house. He had requested Mr. Knapp to get him two more carpenters, and as these two men made their appearance, they were set to work placing the window frames in position, while James and his helper nailed on the weather boards. Frank was busily employed in filling the troughs in the bottom of the scow with ballast, or stones, which made the scow ride much steadier on the water.

James had also employed a stranger who had applied for work. This man had the appearance of being respectable, but he turned out to be a first-class rogue. He was a good workman, slept in the scow during the night, and James had agreed to give him one dollar per day and his board. There was a force of five men now at work on the house (not including Old Harry and Frank) and when Saturday evening came it was found that the house was ready for the ceiling boards, for it had been decided to line the interior with these boards. James had placed the chimneys in position. These were made of cement drain pipe. The bottom of the first length had been half filled with cement. This was done so as to prevent any sparks or fire coming in contact with the floor. The inlets had been left in the chimneys at their proper places for the stove pipes. A

thin coating of cement had been placed on the outside of the chimneys, so as to prevent any smoke from finding its way through where the lengths were joined together. The whole was covered with a wooden casing. This casing was fastened to the ceiling and floor. It also hugged the pipe very close, thus making it rigid and strong.

All the ladies of Mr. Knapp's household, including Mrs. Sanger, had become very much interested in the house. James and Sadie had invited them to spend the first day with them when they sailed or floated down the river. Fannie had been the leading spirit in this movement. She and Sadie were to have entire charge of the arrangements for that day. Clinton Knapp was also expected home by that time. Sadie and the boys had often heard of Fannie's brother, who was at college.

They all had expected to see him that summer, but just before college term closed, the boy's health had failed through overstudy, and Mr. Knapp had decided to have him spend the summer in the White Mountains. A friend of the family, who was a prominent physician in the city, had accompanied the boy, and while he reported that Clinton's health had improved, he advised that he be kept from his studies for the remainder of the winter.

The Hulls had selected the fifteenth day of October as the day when they should float down the river in their Home Afloat, and Mr. and Mrs. Sanger had promised to spend three or four days with them. There was considerable work to be done, and James did not think that he could get everything ready before that time. There was some carpenter's work to be done. The house would have to be painted both inside and

out. The vegetables that were in the garden would have to be put on board, and he also wished to get new furniture from the city.

James concluded that he would not have work for all of the men and when he paid them their money, he told the last three he had employed that there was no more work for them. He told the stranger if he wished they would keep him until Monday morning. The man thanked him, and said he would remain until that time and then go on his way.

A stove had been placed in the dining room on the scow, and a fire had been started in it. Most of the ceiling boards had been carried into that room, in order to have them dry out as much as possible before nailing them in place.

That evening as the Hull family retired for the night they little thought they were about to pass through one of the most exciting events in their lives. It was about one o'clock that night when the whole family was aroused by hearing Sadie's voice calling, "James, James, come quick!" James was out of bed in an instant, and was rushing towards Sadie's room, when he ran into Old Harry.

"What is the matter?" called James, as soon as he could recover himself.

Both James and Harry had by this time made their way to Sadie's room, and they saw a lighted candle on the bureau. The bureau drawers were out on the floor and Sadie was crying that the money was gone.

"Yes," said the old darkey, "and we hab dat money agin in 'bout one hour. Jus you childen be quiet and we gwine to cotch the fellar what am took it."



## CHAPTER XIII

### CAPTURE OF THE THIEF AND THE MONEY RECOVERED

The moment Old Harry spoke, assuring them that they would not only get the money back but catch the thief as well, the boys felt relieved for they had found that the old darkey's predictions were more likely to be true than otherwise.

They noticed that the old man was partly dressed and James said, "Why, Harry, how did you get your clothes on so quickly?"

"Ise heard some one walking down to the canal and Ise was just getting into my clothes to go out and seed who it am, when Miss Sadie called. You get your pants on, Massa Jim, and bring your gun, and we soon hab de tief," replied the old darkey. "Did you light dat candle, Miss Sadie? Ise speck Ise seed dat candle in de scow dis afternoon."

Sadie told him that she had found the candle just as he saw it when she awoke.

He told Sadie not to move the light from the room but to remain in bed until they returned. "Massa Frank will take care of you wif his gun," said Harry.

They saw that the old man suspected the stranger whom James had employed. "Come on, Harry, I am ready," said James, and the two passed down the stairs and out of the front door. It was a very dark night, and our two friends could not distinguish an object that was more than twenty feet away from them. When they had turned and walked toward the canal the old man suddenly stood still. "Don you hear dat

boat gwine down de creek? Dat am your boat, Massa James, an your money am in it."

The oars in the boy's boat were covered with leather at the place where they fitted in the oarlocks, so as to enable the person rowing the boat to do so without making much noise. The old man had noticed that the sound made by the man in rowing was caused by his allowing the oarlock to come in contact with the wooden oar, for part of the time they could hear the noise, and then when the oarsman would keep the oars in their proper position, no noise could be heard.

James and Harry ran toward the canal; there they found the boat missing, just as the old man had said. It did not take our two friends long to decide what to do, for they both stepped into Old Harry's boat. Harry told James not to make any noise and that they would have to use the oars as paddles. James saw that they must not let the man in the other boat know that he was being pursued, or he would run his boat ashore, and if he succeeded in getting on land they would not stand much chance of catching him.

The thief had a good start, and could easily reach the river before his pursuers could come up with him. Harry said it was better to let him get well out on the river before they tried to stop him. The two took things very easy, and when they reached the river they could hear the boat going down the stream. They had shortened the distance between themselves and the thief. They also noticed that the man kept his boat in the center of the river, so as to get full benefit of the tide which was running out.

James and Harry now decided to go over to the west

side of the river and pass the thief unobserved. They could then cut across and get in front of his boat and wait for him to row to them. They selected this plan as being the best, for if the thief saw them approaching he might throw the money overboard.

Noiselessly did they urge their boat through the water, stopping every once in a while to listen for the other boat. After paddling for about twenty minutes the sound made by the oars in the other boat could be heard much plainer. Harry told James to lie down in the boat, for he had on a white shirt and it could be seen a much further distance in the darkness than a colored one. The fact was, James had not taken the time to remove his night shirt, but had tucked it in his trousers, in his haste to pursue the thief.

The old man kept his boat close to the bank. As they reached a point opposite the other boat, they could just distinguish through the darkness the form of a man, his body swaying back and forth with the stroke of the oars. The man in the boat suddenly stopped rowing, and our friends thought that they were discovered. They held their breath for a few minutes, and were very much relieved at seeing the man light a match, for they then knew that he had stopped to light his pipe. As the reflection from the match lighted up the man's face, they saw that it was the stranger whom they had befriended. The thief started on his journey again; so did Old Harry. It was not long before the old man had worked his boat well in advance of the other. He waited until he had placed half a mile between the two boats before he attempted to draw out to the middle of the river.

"Now, Massa Jim," whispered Old Harry, "when de boats come together, you jus hold de gun in his face and tell him to hole up his hands."

"All right, Harry, I'll blow a hole through him if he does not do as we tell him."

The other boat could be heard coming closer and closer. Old Harry seemed to be cool, for he steered his own boat so that one of the oars that was in the thief's hand struck the bow of their boat before the man knew he had such close company. At the same moment the two boats came alongside of each other, James shoved the muzzle of his gun within two feet of the man's face, and shouted: "Up with your hands, quick, or I'll blow your head off!"

As the man held his hands up James said, "We will not hurt you if you do as we tell you, but the moment you hesitate, I will pull the trigger of this gun. We will then tie the anchors in these two boats to your body and drop it overboard."

The thief was thoroughly frightened, and begged James not to hold the gun in a line with his face; he said he would do as he was told. Harry had tied the boats together. He had also cut off a piece of the anchor rope to use in tying the man's hands. The old man stepped into the boat with the thief.

"Ise want his hands behind his back, Massa Jim."

James commanded the man to put his hands together behind his back, and allow the old man to tie them. The man obeyed, but pleaded with James not to tie his hands.

"I cannot trust you; if you want to save trouble do as I tell you, and keep still," was James' reply.



The old man lashed the man's hands together; he also tied his feet to the seat of the boat.

Old Harry proceeded to tow the boat containing James and the thief back to the house. James took his position on the seat behind the man so that he could watch his hands; he also helped the old man by rowing. Twice did the man try to talk to James, but James told him that he would have a chance to talk when they had returned to the house. They found it hard work pulling back against the tide. When they arrived at the float, Harry cut the rope that bound the man's feet. James told him to step out and the three walked toward the house, the old man holding fast to the rope that was fastened to the thief's hands. Frank had heard the boats coming up the creek and he met them at the door with a light. They conducted their captive into the dining room and after he was seated James said:

"Where is the money you took?" The man said that he had not taken the money. James saw that the man was getting ugly; he told Harry and Frank to get their guns ready and watch the man while he searched him. The fellow stood up and allowed James to search him thoroughly, but no money could be found, with the exception of the few dollars that had been paid to him that afternoon.

"What have you done with the money you stole from the bureau?" asked James. The man still denied that he had taken it.

"Where is your coat?" demanded James.

"It must be in the boat, Massa Jim," suggested Old Harry. James told Harry to get the coat, and also

search the boat. He told the man to be seated while he seated himself opposite, with his gun pointed directly at him.

They waited for Old Harry to return, and the man pleaded with James to turn the gun in another direction. James replied that he might have to kill him if he did not tell them where the money was, and he did not care how soon the job was over. James was not sincere in his threat, but he wished to frighten the man and make him reveal the place where he had hidden the money. Old Harry soon returned with the coat. He reported that he had made a thorough search in the boat, but had failed to find anything.

James handed him his gun, and taking the coat he commenced to examine the pockets. The pockets were empty, and he was about to throw the garment to one side, when the thought occurred to him that he had better examine the sleeves. He turned one sleeve inside out and felt of the lining. As he did this, the man gave a groan, but they thought that possibly the cords with which his hands were tied were hurting him. James found nothing in this sleeve, but when he turned the other one, he saw that the lining was bulged at the bottom; he also found the lining ripped at the top, and running his hand down between the lining, he drew forth the money. At the sight of the bills the man gave a start, as if he intended to spring at James. Old Harry grabbed him and forced him back into his chair.

Realizing his helpless condition the thief offered no further resistance. James counted the money and found that none of it was missing, and then taking it

up to his own room, he put it away where it was to remain until he could find time to deposit it in a bank, for he had decided not to keep such a large amount of money about the house again.

It was now coming daylight and Sadie was preparing breakfast. Frank and Harry were down at the dock looking after the boats, while James concluded he would interview the thief. He wished to learn how the man found out that there was money in the house. James put the question to him and the man refused to answer, for he had grown sullen. James promised to remove the cord from his hands, and give him some breakfast if he would answer his question.

"Well," replied the thief, "I guess it is all up with me and I will tell you how I happened to know that you had this money. The other men in the scow were talking about what it was going to cost you to finish the house, and I inquired of them where you got the money to pay for everything. They told me that you had money enough for you had sold the hay, and the day before I came here you had sent two thousand skins to the city, which they thought were bought by the gentleman who was out shooting with the old darkey. I concluded that you had received the money for the skins, for I heard the gentleman ask the old man if he gave his money to your sister to keep for him, the same as you boys did; this is why I thought the money was in her room. I decided to try and get that money, and perfected my plan yesterday afternoon. I prepared the boat before I went to the house. I selected the river as a means of escape, for I knew that I was less likely to meet with any one on the river than on the road. When

I got into the house I first found my way to the old darkey's room, but seeing my mistake, I soon found the girl's room. Upon opening the door I made considerable noise, and I waited some time before I attempted to enter, for I had heard her move in the bed. At last I entered the room and placed the candle on the bureau. It was my intention to bind and gag your sister, for I thought that she might have the money hidden in the bed, but upon seeing the bureau I decided to examine the drawers, and if it was not there, then carry out my original plan."

"You intended to kill my sister, for we found a hatchet on the floor," said James, and the boy raised his gun as if to shoot the thief, as he thought of the villain's intention to injure his sister. The hand of Old Harry, who had entered the room, was placed upon James' shoulder.

"Easy, Massa Jim," said the old man, for he saw that the blood had rushed to the boy's face. The thief crouched down in his chair with fright, as he saw the angry boy with the death-dealing weapon at his shoulder and his finger at the trigger.

"Go on with your story," said James, as he lowered the gun.

"Just as I found the money," continued the thief, "your sister again moved, and I left the house as quick as I could, and this is the result."

Frank was told to go to Mr. Knapp's and borrow a horse and wagon. In about one hour he returned, bringing with him Mr. Knapp and a constable. While they were waiting for Frank to return, the cords were removed from the man's hands and he was given some-

thing to eat. He was very careful not to give any trouble, for he saw a determination in the eyes of the young man who was watching him that made him shudder. Neither did he plead for mercy, for he saw that it would be useless.

Mr. Knapp, the constable, and Frank were given their breakfast. When they had finished, the constable handed the thief his coat, telling him to put it on. He also drew from his pocket a pair of handcuffs, then placing one on his own wrist, and the other on the thief's wrist, he declared that he was ready to go. They now proceeded to take their captive to the county jail at Hackensack, where they delivered him to the jailer. In due time his trial took place, he was convicted and sentenced to a term of ten years at hard labor in State's Prison. On their way to the jail James told Mr. Knapp how they had captured the thief, the thief declaring that it was the neatest thing he had ever seen. for he had no idea that there was anyone within five miles of him, until he heard James' voice commanding him to hold up his hands. "Had you not taken me by surprise I would have dropped overboard with the money, for I am a good swimmer and I could easily have made my way ashore."

Mr. Knapp complimented James upon the good judgment he had shown in capturing the thief, and when they had returned to the house he advised him to let him have the money and he would keep it in his safe until he was ready to deposit it in the bank. This James did, Mr. Knapp giving him a receipt, which James was to return to him when he received the money.



## CHAPTER XIV

### JAMES RESENTS INSULTS TO HIS SISTER AND HER FRIEND

The following week was a busy one for James. He was anxious to get the house painted, and he set about mixing the paint the first thing Monday morning, while the carpenter was fitting the sash in the windows. He was also compelled to build a temporary scaffold around the outside, so as to enable them to paint it. By the time this was done, Harry and Frank had returned from attending to the traps. They were set at work putting on the paint, and although they worked hard, they did not succeed in getting the first coat on the outside before twelve o'clock the following day.

At the dinner table Sadie reminded them that they had not seen anything of the Knapps the day before. and it was so unusual for some one of that family not to have called, that she was afraid that they might be sick. James told her that she had better run out to their house during the afternoon.

"Frank can go as far as the churchyard with you and then return. I will call for you about six o'clock."

Sadie, with Frank as her escort, was soon on her way to the Knapps. The boy left his sister at the churchyard and returned to the house. Sadie continued on her way, and when she arrived opposite the tavern known as the Club House, she noticed that there were several young men standing by the stoop. These men were habitual loungers at this tavern, and they had annoyed both Sadie and Fannie on several occasions, when they were driving past the place. They began talking in a loud voice, and made remarks

that were intended for Sadie's ears. She quickened her steps and took no notice of them. One of the men more bold than the rest approached her and commenced talking to her. She was trembling with fright, but as the man continued walking at her side she stopped and said: "If you do not attend to your own affairs and let me alone you will get into trouble."

At this the man gave a loud laugh and returned to his companions. The girl hurried forward and was soon at her friends' house. Here she was met at the door by Fannie.

"Why Sadie," exclaimed her friend, "what is the matter; has anything happened? You look as pale as a ghost."

Sadie told her friend of the actions of the man at the tavern.

Fannie was indignant and said it was a shame. "I will tell my father, and he will not allow us to be subjected to such annoyance in the future, and, oh, Sadie, I have such good news for you; what do you think? Clinton is home. He and father are out on the place somewhere. Clinton wanted to look around; he has been away a whole year, and we are all so glad to see him that we did not have time to call on you yesterday. Father went to the city yesterday morning to meet Clinton and they arrived home by one o'clock; we hardly knew him, he has grown so tall," and Fannie commenced to give her friend a description of Clinton, who, she said, "was just the dearest and best brother in the world. Come on, Sadie, you can see him for yourself," said the excited girl, as she ran for her hat.

Sadie was a little reluctant about meeting this



young man, but Fannie told her that she was going to see a great deal of her brother, for she heard her father tell Clinton at the breakfast table, that he intended to take him to see the Hull boys that evening.

"I'll tell you, Clinton, what I believe," said Mr. Knapp. "The outdoor life that these boys have been leading for the past six months is just what you need, and I would like to have you spend a good part of your time with them. You will find James a good, straightforward, manly fellow, and I know that you two will get along together," and the father proceeded to give his son the history of our young friends.

While Fannie was relating the above conversation, she had taken Sadie by the arm, and they were walking toward the barn.

When six o'clock came, James started to call at Mr. Knapp's for his sister. Just as he was passing the Club House, he heard a loud voice exclaim, "Why, Sam, there goes that fresh young brother-in-law of yours." He paid no attention to the remark, but when a loud burst of laughter followed it, he looked in the direction from which the laughter came, and saw three young men sitting on the stoop of the tavern. He saw that it was meant that he should hear the remark, for the men were looking and laughing at him. He walked on trying to solve the meaning of it all. Suddenly he stopped, and the thought, what, if these men had insulted his sister as she passed the place that afternoon? occurred to him. His first impulse was to return, and ask the men what they meant, for James Hull was not a coward and had he known of the insults that his sister had been subjected to, he would not have

hesitated, but would have called these men to account at once.

James was nineteen years of age. He was as tall and large as the average man, while the training that he had received during the past few months had made the muscles of his arms, back and chest almost as hard as iron. All this was disguised by a youthful and pleasant countenance. He decided to ask Sadie if she could explain the actions of these men before he said anything to them.

When he arrived in front of Mr. Knapp's house, he saw Fannie, Sadie and a young man on the lawn in front of the house. Both girls ran to meet him, and the young man walked leisurely toward him. As the two young men approached each other, Fannie said: "James, this is my brother, Clinton; Mr. Knapp, Mr. Hull." As Fannie used the prefix Mr., both boys laughed, and Clinton said, "Well, we may as well settle one thing right away. I cannot have you calling me Mr. when father is around, and as these girls have decided that I must call you Jim or James, you call me Clint."

"That is a go, Clint," said James, "let us shake."

"You bet it is, Jim," said Clinton, as the two boys shook hands for the second time.

These four were soon talking and laughing as if they had been acquainted for years, but Sadie noticed that James' face was not as bright as usual, and when she got a chance she inquired what the trouble was. He replied by asking her if she had met any one on her way to Mr. Knapp's that afternoon. Sadie told her

brother of the insults that she had been subjected to at different times.

"Well," said James, "there is only one thing to be done and that is to put a stop to it. I will go and see Mr. Donnelly, who is the proprietor, and I think he will see that those men behave themselves when they are at his house."

James started toward the tavern and Sadie joined her two friends. They had seen James leave the place without saying good-bye, and they asked Sadie what was the matter. Sadie whispered to Fannie, who exclaimed that it was too bad, her father and brother ought to have gone with him, "let us find father and tell him at once."

James, in the meantime, had reached the tavern. There was no one sitting on the stoop and the young man walked into the bar-room. The three men whom he had seen were leaning against the bar. He saw the proprietor standing at the end of the bar, and walking up to him, he said: "Mr. Donnelly, on several occasions when my sister has been passing your house, she has been insulted by some of the men who make a practice of lounging about on your stoop. I want to know from you whether you are going to permit this thing to continue or not. If you do not stop it there is some one who will do it for you."

Mr. Donnelly smiled at the earnest manner with which James addressed him, but did not seem to be much concerned. His only reply was that he guessed there was no harm meant. Before James could speak again he heard a voice call out: "Say, young fellow, I am the man that spoke to your sister this afternoon,

and I will do it again; if you have anything to settle on that score come outside and settle it with me." James replied, "As to going outside I do not care where the matter is settled, and as this man (pointing to the proprietor) is responsible for what takes place in his house, I prefer to settle it here."

"Go hit the youngster a slap on the jaw, Sam," said one of the men.

The man who was addressed was known as the bully of the town, and his name was Samuel Wilson. Sam proceeded to act on his friend's advice. James waited for the man to come to him. He stood in the center of the room with his arms folded, and when the man struck at him he bent his knees, thus drawing his head down, so that the man's hand swung over the top of his head. As James straightened up he delivered a blow with his right hand under the man's chin. The noise made by the teeth coming together was heard all over the room. As the man's head flew backwards James landed his left on the neck with such force that it sent the man reeling over against his companions. He would have fallen to the floor if they had not supported him and placed him in a chair.

James assumed his former position in the center of the room, and Mr. Donnelly, addressing him, said: "Young man, you will have to go out of here, I do not allow fighting in my house."

"No," said James, "but you allow loafers to sit on your stoop and insult my sister every time she passes. You also allowed this man to try and slap my face; if you do not allow fighting, why did you allow him to do that? There are two more men in this room, Mr.

Donnelly, that I am going to have an understanding with before I leave it; but I want to learn if the fellow who is sitting in the chair has settled this matter to his entire satisfaction, and none of them are going to leave this room until the whole trouble is settled." As James said this he moved closer to the door so as to prevent any one from getting out. Just then the door opened and in walked Mr. Knapp and Clinton.

Mr. Knapp looked at James, then at the man in the chair with his two friends rubbing his throat, and wiping the blood from his mouth. He saw how matters stood, and walking over to the proprietor, said:

"Mr. Donnelly, what do you mean by allowing these men to insult my daughter and her friend whenever they pass your house?

Mr. Donnelly protested that he was not aware that anything of the kind had occurred, or it would not have happened more than once. He was very profuse in his apologies, and begged Mr. Knapp not to make any trouble for him.

Mr. Knapp turned to James and said, "I am sorry, my boy, that you did not come to me, before coming here."

Here James interrupted him and replied: "Mr. Knapp, I thank you for your good intention and for your kindness to us all, but this matter is not settled yet and it will not be settled until I am through with it. I asked this man (pointing to Donnelly) to help me settle it peaceably, but he treated me with contempt. He wanted to see a fight and he will have all he wants of it before I go out of here."

"You are hot-blooded, my boy, keep cool," said Mr.

Knapp, "and you will save trouble. Come, James, go home with us; you will have no further trouble from these men."

James walked over to the two men, who were leaning against the bar, and said: "I want to know before I leave this room whether you two men have concluded to stop insulting my sister." As James said this and thought of the insults, his eyes flashed and the blood rushed to his face. As the two men beheld the fury that was pent up in the young man that stood before them, and which he was trying hard to control, they turned pale and quailed before it. They made haste to apologize and claimed that they would not have acted in the manner they did, if they had not been drinking.

As they said this James cooled off somewhat, and turning to the proprietor, said: "You, Donnelly, are the man who is responsible for all this trouble. You sell your poison to these men in order to get their money. That poison robs them of their reason and they do not know how to treat their neighbors properly; such men as you are a curse to the country, and it is you that deserves the thrashing instead of them." He now turned to the man whom he had hit, and placing his hand upon his shoulder, said, "Come, my man, I bear you no ill will. I did wrong to strike you, but I was partly justified in doing so." The man felt too mortified and revengeful to reply, and James, after waiting a few minutes, turned and left the place with his friends.

The following day, bully Wilson could have been seen at the tavern with his head bandaged up, for his

jaw was broken and most of his teeth were loose. The news soon spread that he had received a good whipping, and pretty much everybody was glad of it, for this young man had become a terror to the neighborhood.

While on their way to Mr. Knapp's house, the father blamed his daughter for not having informed him of the conduct of these men. "You must be on the watch, James," he said, addressing our hero, "for Wilson will try to injure you in some way or other. He has been in several pretty bad scrapes, but so far he has succeeded in evading the law. He will not forget this thrashing that you have given him, and he will try to get what he calls even with you."

"I am not afraid of him," replied James, "and it will be a sorry day for him if I catch him trying to play any tricks on me."

"Ah, my boy, you will not catch him," said his friend, "for he is a sneak, bully and coward. He will watch for the chance to get you into trouble, and you will have to be on your guard."

That evening as James and Sadie bid their friends good night, Clinton promised that he would spend the following day with them.





## CHAPTER XV

### ATTEMPT TO DESTROY HOME AFLOAT AND ITS FAILURE

James told Sadie that evening that she need not be afraid of being annoyed again by those men, for they had promised to behave themselves in the future.

Old Harry was the only one he told of the trouble he had had with Wilson. The old man rubbed his hands and grinned as James told the story, and when he had finished, the old darkey said:

"Yous hab done gone an' gib dat rascal de berry ting he wants; it am gainst my principles to fit, but de good Lord do His work in mistrious ways, and Ise believ dat you hab done His work when yous gib dat fellow a trounsen. Der am lots of trouble ahead for you, Massa Jim, and Ise tink dat Ise mout as well stay bord dat house on de scow, for he am sure to play a trick on you dat cost you sumfin."

"Well, Harry," replied James, "both you and Mr. Knapp seem to think that this man will try and injure me in some way or other. Your suggestion to sleep on the scow is a good one, and I will try and arrange an alarm. It must be set in such a manner that no stranger can approach the scow unless you receive warning. We will attend to these things tomorrow."

Bully Wilson had been the one thorn in the side of the old darkey's life during the past five years. When Wilson was about fifteen years of age the old man had caught him lifting one of his fikes, and had given him a sound thrashing. After that the old darkey could not keep a net set in the creeks. When he would go to examine them he would find them cut and destroyed.

He had lost three dogs within this time, and the old man blamed Wilson for their disappearance; for two of them had been found shot to death, while the other one had been last seen in his company. His boat had been stolen, and hidden in the meadow a number of times. The old darkey had watched, and tried in several ways to catch the author of all his trouble, but the rogue was a cunning one, and these persecutions only ceased when Wilson became too dissipated and lazy to longer continue them.

All this the old man told James, and our hero saw that he would have to keep a sharp lookout or this rogue would get the better of him. The work on the house made rapid progress. Clinton Knapp had offered his services to James, telling him as he did so that he wanted to be ordered around the same as if he was regularly employed, and was receiving a stated amount for his time. James and Clinton worked together; while one would saw the ceiling boards the proper length, the other would nail them in their place.

The evening after the trouble at the tavern, Old Harry went to sleep in the scow. James had placed long, thick stakes at the end and sides. These stakes had been sharpened and driven into the mud with a heavy sledge, and although the scow was afloat it could not be removed from its crib work without considerable trouble. All that week the work went forward without interruption. Closets were placed in the kitchen and dining room for the dishes. Wardrobes were also built in the bedrooms. A stairway was made leading from the boys' room down into the dining room, and a

ladder was so arranged that Old Harry could reach his room from the kitchen.

The outside of the house had received its second coat of paint, and when Saturday night came it was found that the house was practically finished, with the exception of painting the interior. The alarm that James had devised had been set every evening. It consisted of a piece of strong cord running around the entire outside of the house, and ending in the room where the old man slept. The ends of the cord were fastened to a large sleighbell. This bell was placed upon a chair, and when any one pulled on or came in contact with the cord, the bell would fall to the floor, and thus awaken the old man. The cord was held in position by supports, with screw-eyes fastened in the end of them. These supports were pieces of wood, and they projected two feet out from the scow, the cord being run through the screw eyes, and adjusted in such a manner that no boat or man could approach within two feet of the scow, unless they were aware that the cord was there. Old Harry would set this alarm after it was dark, and remove it the first thing in the morning.

That Saturday night after the old darkey had finished his supper and was going on board of the scow, he heard a boat coming down the creek. He made as little noise as possible in getting aboard, and then stepping into the house he waited for the boat to go by. Something seemed to tell the old man that he was going to have visitors that night, and he had told the boys that it was about time they heard from the rascal. The old man listened, and soon learned that the party in the

boat was trying to make as little noise as possible. The alarm was not set, and the boat was coming towards the scow. It drew alongside, and Harry saw that it contained two men. They examined the stakes that had been driven into the mud to hold the boat in position, and then one of the men said in a low tone of voice, "You will never be able to get her out, Sam, without making a great deal of noise. It is too risky to set her going here, for she would make such a blaze that we might be seen before we could get away. Why not get a brace and bit, and bore a few holes in her. I hear that they have got her well ballasted, and I believe that if we let the water into her, she will go to the bottom."

"By jove, Bill, I never thought of that. I think we had better try your plan; it will not be so risky as mine, and I like it better. We can come around tomorrow and see the roof sticking out of the water, and we can offer them our sympathy, for they will not find the holes for at least a week."

Both men laughed as Sam Wilson said this, for the two men were none other than Wilson and a boon companion of his named Bill Barker.

As soon as these two worthies were well away from the scow, Old Harry lost no time, but went on shore. He told James what he had seen and heard. James laughed and said, "You have done well, Harry; you and I will give those two fellows a dose of their own medicine. We will go on board and talk things over." They were soon on the scow, and James asked Harry how he thought they had best handle the two men.

The old man said that they had better let them get to work, and then catch them at it.

"I have a plan, Harry; I will tell you what it is and then you let me know what you think of it. I do not want to send either of these men to prison on account of their families. I understand that this Wilson has one of the best mothers in the world, and if that is so, I would almost as soon lose every dollar that we have than to stab her to the heart, as I surely would if I sent her boy to jail. I am going to try and make a friend of that fellow, and I want you to help me. Now, my plan is this. We will each take a large stone from the pile that is on the deck, and carry it upstairs. When these chaps return, they will probably tie their boat alongside of the stake that is at the middle of the scow, for they will want to bore the holes in the middle. They will be close together in the boat, as one must hold on to the stake while the other pushes on the brace, or their boat will be forced away from the side. We will then knock the bottom out of their boat, by letting our big rocks drop on it, and we will have these two laddie bucks in the water. We will also have much better evidence against them. There is no danger of their being drowned, for they can hold on their boat until we fish them out."

The old darkey rubbed his hands together, and exclaimed, "Dat am de finest plan Ise eber heard ob, Massa Jim, and we gib dem fellers a skeer for sure."

They walked toward the pile of stones that had been placed on the deck that afternoon, for James had found that the scow could stand more ballast, and he concluded to take on all she would carry. They each

selected a stone, almost as heavy as they could lift, and carried it upstairs, where they waited for the two rascals to return. James told Harry that when they came alongside he would watch them from his window. "When you see me pick up my stone you do the same; we must let them fall as nearly as possible at the same time; I will say, 'Go,' and you can then let it drop."

In about one hour from the time they left the scow Wilson and his friend were again heard by the two watchers coming to carry out the plan suggested by Bill Barker. Noiselessly did they approach, but the quick ear of Old Harry had heard them. When they had come alongside, James looked out of the window to see what they were doing. He saw Wilson roll up the sleeves of his shirt, for it would be necessary for him to put his hands into the water, in order to bore the hole low enough in the side of the scow to allow the water to run in.

"Bring the anchor rope here, Bill, and put it around this stake, then hold fast to it. You want to come here where I am, and sit on the other side of the boat, or we will upset," said Wilson.

James and Harry heard the two rascals making their preparations, and when James thought that they had commenced their work, he looked down on them from the window above. He saw Wilson lying on one of the seats, with his shoulders and arms over the side of the boat. Barker was standing over him, holding to the rope. He saw that the time for him to act had arrived, and taking up the stone, he leaned far out of the window and, seeing that Old Harry had done the

same, he gave the word, and both the stones struck the bottom of the boat at the same instant.

James did not wait to see how much damage the stones had done, but he and the old man made their way downstairs. They looked along the side of the scow and saw that one of the men was clinging to a stake, while the other was in the boat which was full of water.

"Get into your boat, Harry," said James, "and bring that fellow that is in the boat here to me. If he tries any funny business, I will give him a dose of shot," and James held his gun where the two men could see it.

Old Harry soon had the stern of his boat where Wilson could reach it, for it proved to be this rascal who was sitting in the boat. He was brought to the scow, where James told him to do as he was told, and no harm would come to him.

"I will shoot you, Wilson, as quick as I would a muskrat," said James, "if you offer any resistance."

Wilson's hands were tied behind his back, and the other man was then brought aboard and treated in the same manner.

"Now go and look for the brace and bit, Harry," said James, "and see if these rascals put any holes in the scow. I want you to be sure that the water is not getting into her."

Harry returned, and reported that the hole did not go all the way through the side. He had found the bit sticking in the hole, but the brace, he said, must be at the bottom of the creek.

"We will get that tomorrow," said James, "now let us go on shore."

They were soon on land, and when they reached the

house, James gave Frank his gun, telling him to put it away, that he had the men where they could be handled without it. The two men were wet and shivering with the cold.

"Come, Harry, you take this fellow and I will take Wilson, and we will go for a walk," said James, and the four started down the road toward the Club House.

"What are you going to do with us, Hull?" said Wilson, as they walked away.

"What would you do, Wilson, if you caught anyone trying to serve you as you tried to serve me?"

"I guess I'd put 'em in the jug," said Wilson.

"Do you think that your mother will like to hear that her boy is in jail?" and as James asked him this question Wilson exclaimed, "My God! Hull, don't lock us up, for her sake. I promise you I will never try and injure you again if you will let us off."

"Look here, Wilson," said James, "when we parted the other night I told you that I bore you no ill will, and I wanted you to look over the trouble we had on that evening. I had more cause to feel hard toward you than you had to feel hard toward me, but you gave me to understand that you wanted more trouble, and you have found what you were looking for. You intended to burn my house, and then you changed your mind and decided that you would sink it. It does not matter how I happened to know this, but I do know it, and you will have to admit it before I am through with you. There is only one way that you two men can escape a long term in prison. I am going to give you a chance to become decent men, but I am not going to run any risk in giving you that chance. I do not know



this other man, and I fail to understand why he should want to do me an injury; but I suppose you have made a tool of him, and I will give him the same chance that I give you. When we arrive at the Club House, you can take your choice between going into the bar-room of that tavern, and making a full and complete confession before every one there; I will write the confession down and you can sign it, or I will take you to Mr. Knapp's, where we will get a horse and wagon, and I will give you a ride to the jail at Hackensack. If you decide to go to jail, I will have to make a charge against you, and when that is once made, I will not withdraw it, but I will send you to prison for as long a term as possible. Which shall it be, the prison or the confession?"

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## CHAPTER XVI

### CONFESSION OF THE WRECKERS, AND ENEMIES WON TO FRIENDSHIP

Wilson hesitated, and asked James if he would not take them before Mr. Knapp, and let them make the confession at his house. "No," replied James, "I want as much evidence against you as I can get. Then if ever I have reason for suspecting you of trying to injure me, or this old man, in any way, I will make a charge and produce this evidence against you. I also want to punish you in some way, and you must admit that when the enormity of your crime is considered, the punishment is a very light one."

Wilson did not want to go before the men in the tavern, some of them he knew would laugh at him, but Bill Barker settled the matter by saying:

"Look here, Wilson, Hull is letting us down very easy; you have got me into a nice scrape. I had no business to try and give you a hand in this dirty work. These people never laid a straw in my way, and I was a big fool to be led into it by you. I will do as he wants me to, if he will give me the chance, and after that I will do him a good turn the first time that I can."

They were now in front of the tavern, but James did not halt, but going past it, when Wilson said, "I thought that you were going in there."

"That is for you to say," replied James, "you are the ringleader in this business, and it is for you to decide whether we go in or not. If we go in, you will

have to make the confession. I do not propose to waste much time, trying to persuade you what you had better do, for I do not want to be up all night."

"Well, I'll do it," said Wilson, as James pulled on the rope, with which his hands were tied.

James led the way into the tavern, and conducting the two culprits to the center of the bar-room floor, he turned toward those present and said:

"Mr. Donnelly and gentlemen, you will please excuse me for interrupting your social enjoyment, but there are times when we all have a public duty to perform, and I believe in performing a duty as quickly as possible. These two men (pointing at the culprits) wish to make a public confession, and as this is the only public house in this vicinity, I have brought them here; are you willing to listen to them? The reason for their hands being tied will be explained during the confession."

The two men presented a sorry spectacle as they stood in the center of the room. Their clothes were wet, and as James was holding the ends of the rope with which their hands were tied, they were certainly in a most humiliating position. Almost all the people present said that they were willing to listen to what the men had to say, and after James had procured pen, ink and paper, he told Wilson that he might proceed.

Wilson started in with the idea that the shorter he made the confession, the quicker he would be able to get away, but James made him start over again, telling him to let the people know what had prompted him to try and injure him.

Wilson told how he had made up his mind to get

even with James, and had persuaded Barker to join him by telling him that the Hull boys were catching such a large number of rats that in a short time no one else would be able to make a dollar in the meadow. "I told him that they were building this house, so as to be able to go from place to place in the meadow. When they have caught all the rats in one place, they will shift their traps and boat, and you will not be able to get many rats. As Bill makes a few dollars in the meadow, he said it was not right that strangers should be allowed to take the bread and butter out of the mouths of people who had lived around there for years. I did not have much trouble in persuading him to join me in carrying out my plan to burn the house, and it was our intention to do so tonight, but when we got alongside the house, we found her hemmed in with large stakes that were driven deep into the mud. We had intended to float her down the river, and set her afire there. This would give us a chance to get away without being seen. As we could not get the stakes out we decided to bore holes in her, and let her go to the bottom. We then returned to the bridge, and I borrowed a brace and bit from Mr. Donnelly. When we returned to the scow, I commenced to bore the holes, and we were caught in the act." Wilson was asked how he managed to get wet. "We were knocked overboard and then fished out," he replied.

James directed Old Harry to cut the cords that bound the men's hands. He now handed them the written confession, telling them to read it, and after they had done so they affixed their signatures to it.

Our hero told those present why he had decided not

to prosecute the men. "I wanted to give them another chance," said James.

On the following day three of the most prominent men of the place called to see James. They wanted him to prosecute Wilson. They told him that they had been trying for the past three years to procure evidence against him, for they believed that he was responsible for some of the crimes that had been committed in that vicinity during that time. They also told him that he was doing himself and the community a great wrong in allowing the rogues to go free. To all of this James replied that he had given his word to the men that he would not send them to prison, and he intended to keep it.

"Well, Hull," replied the spokesman of the party, "if you do not make a charge against this fellow, we will, and we will compel you to testify and produce the evidence." It now began to look serious for Wilson and Barker, for the gentlemen appeared to be very much in earnest.

James pleaded with them and tried to get them to promise not to carry out their intentions. They finally promised him they would not take any action before the following Saturday.

"We are going to hold our annual election for school trustees at the schoolhouse on Friday night, and we will bring this matter before the meeting, and if it is the sense of the meeting that Wilson be allowed another chance, we will abide by it. That man, Hull, is a sneak, bully and a coward, he is a dangerous man to be at large, and we are sorry to see you plead his cause. You had better come down to the meeting and you will

then see what a feeling there is against this fellow."

After the gentlemen had gone away, James sat on the stoop thinking the matter over, when Old Harry approached him and said, "Ise spect, Massa Jim, dat dose gemmen was hiar to seed you about dat rascal, an Ise feered you has gone done wrong when you let him go."

"Look here, Harry," said James, "you and I are trying to lead a Christian life; we want to do what we think is the right thing, not only for ourselves and our neighbors, but also for these two men as well. I believe it is our duty to try and lift them up, and not help push them further down. Wilson has not done us much harm so far, and I do not believe that he will try to again. The gentlemen who were just here, seemed determined to have Wilson locked up, and I intend to prevent it, if such a thing is possible. I want you to find Wilson this afternoon, and tell him that I want to have a talk with him."

Old Harry saw Wilson that afternoon, and he promised to call at the house that evening. After the Hull family had finished their supper, Wilson called as he had promised. The rest of the family retired from the dining room, leaving James and Wilson alone. They were not long alone when James said:

"Wilson, I thought when we parted the other night, that we had settled this trouble you and Barker got into, but I find that other people are not willing to let the matter drop. They want me to prosecute you, and as I have given you my word that I will not do so, as long as you behave yourself, I told them that I intended to keep my word with you. They then said

that they would make a charge against you, and subpoena me as a witness, and compel me to testify. If they do this, I will have to tell the truth, and you will be convicted and sent to prison. I do not want to see either of you go there. You are both young men, and if you will make up your minds to turn over a new leaf, you will find it just as easy to live a decent life as to live the life you have been leading. I have just learned that for the past three or four years you have considered it was your duty to annoy your neighbors, and cause them as much trouble as possible. You do not seem to have any friends, and it is all owing to the manner in which you have treated people, for I have yet to hear anyone speak a good word for you. The gentlemen who called on me this morning, promised not to take action against you, but leave it until they held their school election next Friday night. What chance do you think you will stand at that meeting?"

Wilson complained that every one wanted to jump on him because he was down. He said that he would not stand any show, because they were all against him.

"There is where you are wrong, Wilson, every one is not down on you, but you do not show any inclination to reform, and as long as you act in that way, no one can or will help you. I want to be a friend to you, and would be if you would give me the chance. I would like to help you out of this scrape, but if you are going to get into another in a short time, there is no use of my trying. I know others who would help you, if they saw that you were trying to make a man of yourself. The course that you have pursued has gained for you the contempt of every man, woman and child in the



neighborhood. They will all shun you for a while, but if they see that you are in earnest, and really try and be a better man, you will soon gain their respect."

James talked to Wilson in the above manner for about two hours, and at last the fellow broke down, and said that if James would be a friend to him, and help him keep straight, he himself would try and be a better man.

James offered his hand to Wilson who said that he was ashamed to take it. "Never mind that, Wilson," said James, "we have made a bargain and I want you to be truthful and not deceive me. I am going home with you, and we will talk over things on our way to your house."

The two put on their hats and coats and started towards Wilson's home. On their way there James asked Wilson if he knew of any place that he could go and stay for two or three weeks. Wilson replied that he had an uncle who lived up in Orange County, New York, but did not have any money to pay his way, so that was out of the question.

"We will see about that," said James, "I want to have a talk with your mother, Sam. She is the best friend that you have, and we must all work together."

They soon arrived at Wilson's house. The door was opened by Mrs. Wilson. Sam introduced James to his mother, and as our hero looked at her, he noticed that she had been crying. They were soon seated, and James told the mother the object of his call. "I want Sam to go away for two or three weeks, Mrs. Wilson ;

do you think his uncle would be glad to have him pay him a visit?"

"I am sure he would," replied the mother, "but I cannot spare the money to pay his fare. Oh, Mr. Hull! will you help keep my boy out of prison? I know all about what he has been doing, for it has been talked about all day long at the grocery store, and Mrs. Ward told me that they were going to put him in prison. They said that he had been let run long enough and it was time to get rid of him," and the poor woman cried as if her heart would break, as she appealed to James for help.

Our hero waited for the mother to become somewhat composed. After a while she became calmer, and James told her that he was going to try and help her son to be a better man. "I will furnish you with enough money to pay his way to and from his uncle's, and he has promised to make himself useful while he is there. When he returns home he can spend some of his time at my house, and I will put him in the way to make a little money. You had better write to your brother tonight, and tell him that Sam will take the early train for Goshen on Thursday morning, and in the meantime you can get things ready for him." It was now agreed that Sam's departure should be kept a secret, and that he should start before daybreak on Thursday morning. Mrs. Wilson was to meet her son in the city, and see him safely off on his journey.

Sam promised James that he would not go into a tavern or drink intoxicating liquor of any kind while he was away. He also promised to pay back any money that James might choose to let his mother have.

James handed Mrs. Wilson twenty-five dollars, telling her to let Sam have five of it to keep in his pocket, and to buy the tickets and such things as she thought he was most in need of with the balance.

Thanking James for his kindness, Mrs. Wilson accepted the money. When she had finished talking, Sam stepped forward and taking James by the hand, said, "Hull, you are making me feel about as mean and small as it is possible for a fellow to feel. I am leaving this place feeling that there is one here, besides my mother, who wishes me well, for I know, that when one man goes down into his pocket for another, his friendship is more than skin-deep. I thank you, Hull, and I will pay you back the money as soon as I have a chance to earn it. I will also prove to you that I am worthy of this kindness and your friendship."

Samuel Wilson left his home the following Thursday morning, and met his mother in the city, as arranged. He was soon on his way to his uncle's home, where he arrived in due time.

In about two months after Wilson had left the town James received a letter from him. In it Sam stated that his uncle wanted to build a house on the farm for him and his mother to live in. He also wanted him to work the farm on shares the following year, and he thought he would accept the offer.

The day after receiving this letter James called to see Mrs. Wilson. The mother showed him a number of letters from her brother that were full of praise of Sam, and they also showed James that the brother was anxious and willing to provide a good home for his sister and her son. James advised her (Mrs. Wilson)

to write to her brother and accept his kind offer, and he would help her pack her things, and see that they were properly shipped.

In good time the Wilsons were installed in their new home and Sam became one of the most prosperous and highly respected men in that section of the State. Every summer he would look forward with pleasure to the time when his friends, Mr. and Mrs. James Hull, would pay him a two weeks' visit, for he insisted upon giving James the credit for his reformation. He would devote his whole time, and make any sacrifice, while they were there, to make their visit a pleasant one.

Once when James said that they were causing him a lot of trouble, Wilson exclaimed, "Trouble! Why, Hull, it is a pleasure and not a trouble. You do not seem to realize what you did for me. It was you that saved me from becoming a convict and an outcast. Nothing that I, or my family, can or may do towards entertaining you can be anything but a pleasure to us, and I trust that you will grant us that pleasure as often as possible, for if ever one man had cause to feel grateful towards another, I have cause to feel grateful towards you; please do not speak of causing us trouble again, but let me do what I can towards repaying you for your kindness."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MEETING AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE

No one in the village was aware of Wilson's departure, and when Friday evening came, James attended the meeting at the schoolhouse. After the election had been held, one of the gentlemen who had been to see James, arose and said:

"Gentlemen, there has been an attempt made to burn or destroy a house that has just been erected. The culprits who made this attempt are said to be none other than Samuel Wilson and William Barker. They were caught in the act, and were forced to make and sign a written confession. This written confession is in possession of the owner of the house, and he refuses to prosecute these villains. I, as well as some others, who are present, have had our barns destroyed by fire, and while we believed that this fellow, Wilson, had a hand in it, we never could secure the necessary evidence against him. We now have a chance to prosecute this rogue and send him to prison, where he will be well taken care of, and where he will not find any barns or houses to burn. It will be an easy matter to compel this party to testify, and produce the evidence that he has against him, and I would like to get the sense of this meeting in regard to taking some action in this matter."

Other gentlemen spoke on the subject, but no one had a good word to say for Wilson. James was called upon to explain his action in allowing the men to go free. Our hero walked to the platform and facing the audience said:

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I have listened to the remarks made by the previous speakers, and it appears to me as if every man's hand is against this Wilson. I do not intend to place a premium on crime, but I wish to say that I would much prefer seeing my house in ashes, than to see this man sent to prison, for I believe that, if he is treated properly, there is still a chance of making a decent man of him. I am a stranger to most of the people present, and I am not thoroughly acquainted with this young man's past life, but from what I have heard during the past week I believe that some of the gentlemen who have spoken so harshly of him are partly responsible for his conduct. His father was called to the other world when the boy was but ten years of age. The duty of providing a living for and guiding his footsteps in the straight and narrow path of life devolved upon the mother. She was a good, kind and indulgent mother, and her whole heart was bound up in that boy. She to-day would gladly give her last drop of blood to keep him out of prison. As a boy he was mischievous, but no more so than other boys. It appears that when any one caught him in mischief they would cuff, kick or thrash him. They did not treat other boys in that manner, for they well knew that the boys had fathers who would resent any such treatment. The boy would appeal to his mother, but she was only a woman, and could not resent these blows, and thus he was driven to resent them himself. What right any one had to thrash this lad, I fail to understand, but I believe that most of the gentlemen who have spoken here this evening have given Wilson a thrashing. Those thrashings, gentlemen, made that boy just the

man you see today, for he knew that you were all taking advantage of his not having a father to protect him. As a boy you made him a sneak, and as a man we find him a scoundrel. 'As ye have sowed, so shall ye reap.'

"I believe, gentlemen, that it will be more to your credit if you try to save this young man from prison, instead of trying to put him there. I am willing to do all I can to save him. You will not be able to put him in prison for some time to come, for he has left this town. If he returns, you had better try and lift him up, and not push him down."

As James took his seat others came forward and spoke in favor of giving Wilson another chance, and it was plain to be seen that our hero had won most of the audience over to his way of thinking. The question was discussed for half an hour, and finally the meeting adjourned, without any action having been taken.

Several of the men, who had been loudest in their demands to have Wilson punished, gave our hero a black look as they passed out of the building.

Wilson and his mother had told James how he had been treated and used by some of the men. They were always ready to blame that Wilson boy for everything that happened within two or three miles of his home. They would accuse him and when he denied it they would give him a kick or a blow. The boy stood this treatment for two years; he finally began to resent these blows and accusations, in a manner that caused their authors great loss or trouble.

As James was leaving the schoolhouse some one seized him by the arm. It was a woman, and at first our hero did not recognize her, but presently she spoke, and

he saw that it was Mrs. Wilson. She was crying, and at the same time trying to thank James for defending her son. James accompanied her home, and while they were on their way there, she told him that she had stood under one of the windows, on the outside, and had heard all that had been said for and against her boy.

James Hull went to his home that night, with a feeling of joy in his heart, such as he had never experienced before. Just before reaching his home he was surprised to find Will Barker standing by the side of the road waiting for him. As they shook hands, Barker exclaimed: "You have saved me from prison, Hull, and I want to do you a good turn; tell me what I can do for you and I will gladly do it."

Our hero placed his hands on the man's shoulders and said: "The only favor you can render me is to try and lead an upright, honest life."

James and Barker had a long talk, and they made an agreement that Barker should call at the Hulls' one evening every week, to bring James the news, as well as report how he was getting along. This he did for one whole year, and at the end of that time the weak character, by leaning upon the strong, had grown robust and self-reliant. In after years William Barker would often declare that it was the helping hand of James Hull that had at last enabled him to make a man of himself. Thus did James dispose of his enemies and at the same time save them from a life of shame and degradation.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### RECEPTION ON THE HOME AFLOAT AND SAILING FOR WINTER QUARTERS

The "Home Afloat" was at last finished, and the boys and Sadie proceeded to furnish it. They bought new carpets for the parlor and bedrooms, also an organ and paintings. They decided that October 15th should be the last day that they would spend in their old home. Just where to locate their new home for the winter months was a subject that had worried James a great deal. At last the time had arrived when this point had to be settled, and, with a view of deciding the problem, one evening he brought the subject up for discussion. Old Harry's opinion was sought, and the old man really selected the place.

"Harry," said James, "where shall we locate for the winter; you know that we cannot go into any of the creeks in the unclaimed lands, for they are on the west side of the river, and we must locate in some place where we can readily reach the village, in case we need the services of a doctor, and where our friends will be able to get to us. If the river is between us and the village, and there is a thin coating of ice on the river, we would be practically isolated from all civilization. I also know that it is necessary to be as near our work as possible; we now have one hundred traps to look after, and half of these must be visited on alternate days. This work keeps two of us busy all the time, and we have got to so arrange our work that Sadie is never left in the house alone. This we have been doing with the assistance of our friends, but it will cease as soon as we move our home. Then again, said James,

we must locate in a creek in which there is always plenty of water, for I have noticed that most of these creeks have very little water left in them when the tide is out, and we must have water enough under our home, so that it will always rest on an even keel; we will also have to fence in our home by driving heavy stakes deep down in the mud at the sides, front and rear, so as to keep it in one position."

As James ceased speaking he looked at the old darkey, who said, "Massa James, Ise knowed dat dis pint would hab to be settled, an Ise hab de place all ready for you's 'spection. It bout six mile down de ribber; Ise ready to take you dere when you is ready to go."

"All right, Harry," said James; "we will row down there tomorrow after we have attended to our traps. I might have known that you would settle this matter for me, but I have been a little anxious about it."

The old man told James that there would be plenty of work for them to do, for they would have to gather a supply of wood for fuel. He also told them that they would find the meadow and river a very cold and windy place during the winter.

"Very well," said James, "we might as well take about four tons of coal along with us, and it will answer for ballast until we use it up."

Frank was told to order the coal on the following day and see that it was properly placed in the hold of the scow. James inquired of Harry if he thought they would have any trouble in getting the house down the river. Harry replied that it would all depend on how much wind there was on that day.

"Well," said James, "we must then wait for a day

when the wind does not blow very strong. We must also purchase three long oars, and fit a pair of oarlocks on the outrigger of the forward deck of the scow." With the oars and the long shoving poles, he thought that they would be able to keep the scow in the center of the river, and also keep her bow turned in the proper direction. After making out an order for the oars, to be given to the expressman the next day, they retired for the night.

The family were up bright and early the following morning, and Harry and James were soon on their way to attend to the traps. The air was quite cold, and Harry predicted that they were going to have an early winter.

James, at first, did not row, as he wanted to inspect the banks of the river as they passed. He had not been up and down the river as often as Harry and Frank, for his time had been taken up with other duties, while they had looked after the traps. He also wanted to observe the currents in the river and gather whatever information he could, so as to be able to guide their new home safely to its winter resting-place.

James found that if he wanted to be comfortable he would have to row, and, taking the remaining pair of oars, they were soon sending the boat through the water at a lively clip. As they made their way down the river they noticed large flocks of wild ducks rising from the water; they would fly off and settle down again in one of the creeks in the meadow. Old Harry informed James that there would be fine sport shooting these ducks in about two weeks, and they must get ready for it, as they could make quite a bit of

money supplying the New York market. He also told him that they would have to get a duck boat, or what is known on this river as a skull-boat. He said that he could buy an old one cheap, and with very little alteration and expense it could be made as good as new. James told him to purchase the boat as soon as he could find time to go after it. They had now arrived at the trapping ground, and they were very busy for two hours in gathering the furs and rearranging the traps. When this work was accomplished they proceeded to visit the creek or place that Harry had selected for their winter home. They were soon on the river, and after crossing over to the eastern shore they rowed down stream for about two miles, when they arrived opposite the mouth of a large creek. On the bank was a post with a sign board, with the words "Bellman's Creek" painted on it. Into this creek Old Harry turned the bow of the boat. James stopped rowing, and directed the old man to proceed very slowly, while he commenced to use a fishing line with a sinker attached to the end for a sounding line. It was low tide, and James found that there was a depth of water of about eight feet all the way up the creek. Five hundred yards from the mouth of Bellman's Creek they entered a smaller creek, and as they entered it James saw the water had become very shallow. This was caused by a bar having formed across the mouth of the creek. The depth of water soon increased, and at last Old Harry stopped rowing and told James that this was the place he had selected. James proceeded to examine the place very carefully and found that they were in a small pond, with an outlet at both

ends, but enough water was in this pond to enable the house-boat to float, and that they could easily bring the boat over the bar at high tide. They went ashore, and Harry pointed out how they could reach the mainland and village by walking over the meadow.

Our two friends returned to the boat, and, as they were both tired and hungry, proceeded to refresh themselves by eating their lunch. After resting for half an hour they found that the tide had turned and was running up; so they started for home, where they arrived at four o'clock in the afternoon.

At the supper table that evening Frank and Sadie were told all about the day's doings, and after the table was cleared away Old Harry arose and said that he was going to the village, and as it would be late when he returned, they must not wait up for him. James, however, remained until the old darkey returned, and he then retired knowing that the scow had a watchman aboard. The following morning they discovered the object of the old man's absence the previous evening, for tied to a stake in the canal was an old and peculiar looking boat. It had a flat bottom, was sharp at the bow and square at the stern. There was a round hole in the stern board, the edges of which were covered with leather. A deck extended or covered over three-quarters of the length of the boat, while along the sides was a board six inches wide, running from the deck to the stern.

"Dere," said Harry, pointing to the craft, "am your skull-boat an yous mout as well pull her out."

The boys and Harry soon had the boat out of the canal and turned over on a pair of wooden horses,

ready for repairing. They examined the boat and decided what repairs were necessary.

Old Harry and Frank were soon on their way to look after the traps, while James busied himself with minor details aboard the scow as well as working on the boat. Thus our friends worked along, and when the fifteenth day of October arrived, it found the house-boat well stocked with provisions and all ready to go into winter quarters. James, with the help of the others, had taken it out of its dock and given it what he called a short trial trip. He wanted to make sure that it was properly ballasted, and that there was no danger of its upsetting. A plentiful supply of strong rope as well as the poles and stakes were aboard. Everything that was wanted had been removed from the house and placed on board. Sadie had supervised this work. She had also provided a grand dinner, and Will Sisco was on hand to assist and wait on the table.

Bill Barker had agreed to help the boys take the house-boat down the river, and had reported for duty. The tide was flood by 8 a.m., and their guests had been requested to be on board not later than that time.

Mr. and Mrs. Knapp, Fannie and Clinton, with their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sanger, were seen approaching, and they were welcomed aboard the "Home Afloat." The tide was running out quite strong, and James removed the stakes from the rear end that held the boat in the slip, thus allowing her to drift out of the dock. There was now only one line holding the boat, and after Old Harry and Barker had brought all the rowboats and tied them to the stern of the scow, they took their position at the oars.

James ordered Frank to cast off, while he hoisted Old Glory to the top of the flagstaff, and amid the playing on the organ of an appropriate and popular song, the "Home Afloat" started down the river. It was three o'clock in the afternoon before they reached Bellman's Creek; they then found that they would not be able to get over the bar at the mouth of the small creek, owing to the tide being so low; so they anchored in the larger creek and waited for the next high tide.

The journey down the river was enjoyed by all. The two girls were the only ones that had any real work to do, and Will Sisco relieved them of as much of this as possible. They had been planning and making arrangements for this dinner for the past two months, and when the guests were seated, they found a menu card by each plate, which was as follows:

### MENU

#### THE "HOME AFLOAT"

October 15, 1865

Oysters, on the Half Shell

Strained Turtle Soup

Fillet of Bass

Broiled Rail Birds

Roast Duck

Cranberry Sauce

Riced Potatoes

Cream Peas

Endive Salad

Celery

Cup Custard

Pumpkin Pie

Watermelons

Stewed Pears

Cheese

Ice Cream

Cream Wafers

Coffee

Cigars

Tea

There was one dish, however, that was served which did not appear on the menu. It had been prepared and cooked by Will Sisco and Old Harry. It was none other than stuffed opossum. When Mr. Sanger heard of this he insisted on having some of it. This led to all hands trying the dish, and it looked for a while as if the two worthies who had prepared it would be cheated out of their portion. The dish was voted to be a first-class treat, and the two darkies were well pleased and enjoyed laughing at white folks eating 'possum. Fannie and Sadie felt themselves well repaid for their trouble, for their guests showered compliments and praise upon them both, Mr. Knapp and Mr. Sanger declaring that no hotel chef could have served up a better repast.

Twelve people in all had accompanied the Home Afloat down the river, and as the sun was sinking in the west our guests took their departure, assuring the Hulls that they would soon visit them again. Clinton was left behind to spend a few days with the boys.

Mr. and Mrs. Knapp, Fannie and Old Harry took their places in one of the boats, while Mr. and Mrs. Sanger, Will Sisco and Bill Barker entered the other.

The ladies enjoyed the three-mile row up the winding creek to the dock, for the meadow was filled with birds and ducks seeking a roosting place for the night, while a school of herring followed the boats almost the entire distance. So plentiful were they that at times, when leaping out of the water, some of them would fall into the boat.

Arriving at the dock, they bid each other good night, and Old Harry rowed the boats back to the scow.



## CHAPTER XIX

### A DAY'S SPORT SHOOTING DUCKS

The following morning the Hull family were awakened at the break of day by some one calling to them. Upon investigating it proved to be Will Barker. He had returned, as he put it, to help them get straightened out. James was glad to accept his services, for he was a large, strong young fellow, and was very anxious to repay James for his kindness toward him. Breakfast was soon over, and Harry, Frank and Clinton were sent off to the traps. They took their decoys and guns along, as they intended to have a try at shooting ducks. Old Harry had prepared the decoys in the following manner: A piece of lead, weighing about one and a half pounds, was screwed to each decoy; this was placed underneath in the center, to act as ballast, and cause the decoy to sit on the water in the most natural way. A small leather loop had also been tacked underneath, to which was attached about six feet of twine, with a heavy spike at the other end. The spike was to act as an anchor.

Sadie watched them from the bedroom window as they rowed straight across the river.

As they approached the opposite shore the old darkey told the boys to stop rowing, and steering the boat to a position about twenty yards off shore, he dropped the decoys overboard. As they danced up and down on the water Clinton declared that they looked so natural, he was almost tempted to shoot at them. They rowed into a small creek, and after hiding their boat in the reeds they proceeded to walk toward

the river. Upon arriving there, they saw their decoys sitting on the water, and they certainly looked as if they were inviting others to join them.

Old Harry pointed to a reed house, or cover, alongside of which the boys had been standing, and told them to go in. So cleverly had this place been designed as a cover, that they did not notice it until the old man called their attention to it. Harry pulled some loose reeds away that were standing up against the front, and exposed the entrance, and the boys, bending low, walked in. The only furniture in the place was three or four soap boxes and a few short pieces of planking that were used as a floor. The old darkey looked up and down the river and finally announced that there were no ducks in sight, and that he would fix up the outside of the house a bit. He cut some of the long reeds and was placing them in position when he caught sight of a large flock of ducks coming down the river. He hurriedly entered the cover and adjusted the reeds before the opening, leaving two small spaces through which the boys were to shoot. He told them to cock both barrels of their guns and get ready. They dared not raise their heads to look out, for fear that they would be seen; they could only watch the decoys.

To say that the boys were excited does not express it. Suddenly there was a loud swishing noise, like the rushing of water, a flapping and whistling of many wings through the air. Two shots rang out, and as they stepped out from under cover, Clinton saw a large flock of ducks flying up the river. He had become so confused and excited that he not only forgot to discharge his gun, but failed to see the ducks until they

were out of range. It was Frank's gun that had been discharged, and lying out on the water were four ducks, while a fifth was swimming among the decoys. Frank was reloading his gun, and as soon as this was accomplished they entered the boat, and were soon out gathering up their game. They had left Clinton standing on the bank of the river, looking sheepish and feeling mortified at his failure. As he stood there with his gun in his hand, watching the others in the boat, he had to struggle hard to keep back the tears.

Just at that moment something happened that cleared the skies. The old man was seen to grasp Frank's gun and at the same time he was looking and pointing back of the house, or cover. Clinton turned and, looking in the direction that Harry had indicated, he saw four ducks coming directly toward him. They were within range, and as his gun went to his shoulder he pulled the trigger. The result was most unexpected. He not only killed the foremost duck of the four, but the bird in falling had pitched forward, and striking him a glancing blow, had toppled him over in the mud. He was soon upon his feet, and with the gun in one hand and waving the duck in the air with the other, he was as delighted a boy as you can imagine.

Old Harry brought down two more of the ducks, one with each discharge of his gun. They gathered these in the boat, and by the time they reached the shore Clinton had cleaned most of the mud from his clothes and gun. He reloaded his gun, and they went once more to cover.

The old man gave them some advice. He told them to be more deliberate and wait until the ducks

were well settled and bunched before they fired. He had been talking to them about ten minutes, when suddenly they were startled by a loud "quack, quack, quack." This came from the river, and sounded as if it were only a short distance away. Such proved to be the case. A flock had been flying low over the water, and upon seeing the decoys had alighted and were swimming toward them, when they heard the voice of the darkey. This caused them to sound the alarm. Our friends remained very quiet, and they were soon rewarded by seeing the head of the column appear opposite the front of the cover.

Both boys had been told to wait until they received a certain signal from Harry before firing. Frank also insisted that Clinton should fire first, the result being an addition of twelve, to be added to the number they had already secured, thus making a total of twenty. They gathered in the ducks and once more retired to their hut to wait for more game.

They had waited about fifteen minutes when a most laughable incident occurred. They were aroused by hearing a great commotion on the river, and upon looking out saw a man standing in a boat striking at the decoys with an oar. As they rushed out of the hut they heard him say: "I have one of yous, anyhow." He had knocked the head from one of the decoys. The boys ran out of the hut, and their shouting soon stopped the man in his wild career.

Harry and Frank jumped into their boat and went out to the man. He proved to be an Irish immigrant who had only been in the country three weeks. He told them that he had seen the decoys from a distance, and

supposing them to be wild ducks he had paddled his boat noiselessly and as close to them as he dared. When within one hundred yards of them he lay down in the boat and, with the oar in one hand, waited until the boat was carried by the tide among the decoys, with the result described.

This incident closed our friends' duck shooting for the day. They collected what was left of the decoys, and after getting Clinton into the boat they started for the traps.



## CHAPTER XX

### PLAN FOR CATCHING FISH IN LARGE QUANTITIES

We will return to the Home Afloat and see what our friends there have been doing. It was flood-tide, and James and Barker easily forced the scow into the small creek and placed it in the position that had been selected. They drove the heavy stakes deep in the mud, both at the sides and ends. A stout rope was tied from stake to stake, long boards were nailed to the stakes close to the water's edge, strong stakes were driven into the mud, at an angle, and the top of each was nailed to the boards, and when the noon hour had arrived, it found the house-boat floating securely within its dock. Dinner was now ready. During the meal James told Barker they would have to go to the woods in the swamp that afternoon and get more of the stakes, for he wanted to build a trestle, so that they could walk from the scow to the meadow. The trestle was to have a gate or draw in it that could be raised or lowered. When raised, no one could walk aboard the scow, without having the gate lowered for them to cross over. He also wanted to build storage bins on the trestle on the side nearest the house.

The question of where and how they were to obtain a supply of fresh water was settled. It was also decided to board up the lower deck so as to give them more house room; it would also make the rooms overhead much warmer. James decided that they would walk across the meadow, and visit the swamp Barker had pointed out from the scow. They visited the

farmer who owned this swamp, and obtained his permission to cut the stakes they required.

After two hours' hard work they had accumulated on the bank of the small creek more than enough stakes to meet their requirements. At the head of this creek they found the spring that Barker had referred to. The next day the stakes were loaded on the two boats and brought to the scow.

In this manner the two young men worked for one week, and at the end of that time the trestle and bins were completed. Something now happened that had a great bearing on the work and life that our boys were to lead during the winter. This something originated with Will Barker. It was a proposition to go into the business of catching fish and sending them to market. He said that he thought he had a plan by which they could catch large quantities and make a nice bunch of money. It would require some capital—he thought about two hundred dollars. He said that he would have to have a small interest in the business, as he would have to devote his whole time to the work.

"Well, Will," said James, "let us hear what you want us to do, and how you propose we shall do it, and I will tell you what I think of it."

At this Barker commenced to unfold his plan. He said:

"You have often noticed how they fish for shad in the Hudson River by setting long rows of poles in the mud, with their tops sticking out of the water. To these poles they fasten nets that are bagshape, only the bag part is very shallow. Well, I propose that we fish for the perch and bass in the Hackensack in the same



manner. The mesh of the nets that we would use will have to be much smaller, but these nets can be purchased in the city. This netting comes in large rolls of different widths. We can cut off the roll just the length we want. We will then have to run a rope around the entire net, leaving a loop at each of the four corners. The fastening of this rope to the net is called 'semming it in.' It is this semming in of the net that forms the bag. Our nets will want to be about fifteen feet long by ten feet wide. The poles will have to be set about twenty feet apart; a ring eighteen inches in diameter is then slipped over the top of each pole; this ring has a heavy weight or stone fastened to it. A short piece of rope is used, one end being tied to the ring, while the other end is tied in the loop on the bottom corner of the net. The next pole in the row is equipped in a like manner, and the ring is fastened to the other bottom loop of the net. The short pieces of rope are called 'bottom arm lines.' You let go the rings and weights, and they slide down the poles, carrying the bottom of the net with them, while you must hold fast to the top of the net and fasten each corner to the poles with a top arm line. The net is now properly set, the bag being carried up or down the river with the tide. Old Harry and myself," said Will, "understand this work, as well as the work of mending the nets. We will not need large boats, like those that are used on the Hudson, for I suggest that we get everything ready, and when the river is frozen over we can set the poles through the ice. This river is usually frozen over solid by the fifteenth of December, and the ice breaks up about the first of March. If we use

good hickory poles, I believe they will stand the wear and tear of the ice, and we can then use these same poles for catching shad. We should have to buy other nets, and build a large or long boat that would reach from pole to pole. This we could easily do if we were successful during the winter months. The hickory poles we could get on the high ground back of the swamp. This piece of woodland belongs to the same man who gave us permission to cut poles in the swamp, and I know that he will sell us the poles that we want cheap. We can easily pull or drag them over the frozen meadow down to the bank of the river."

As Barker paused in his talk James said: "Bill, I believe your proposition is a good one, but it is going to require more money than you suppose to carry it through. However, I want to think it over, and talk with others about it, and I will give you an answer within twenty-four hours. I can readily see, when the meadow is frozen over, where we can use a good horse to advantage, and we would have to build some kind of a stable to keep it in."

Bill bid them all good night, and started for home. After the Hull family had had their supper that evening, the fishing business was the principal topic of conversation. James and Frank were in favor of trying the proposition, while Sadie and old Harry seemed to oppose it. The old man said that they would find it very hard work, and there was a certain amount of danger connected with it. He told them how cold it would be handling the wet nets and fish with the temperature down to zero and the wind and snow cutting them like a knife. Then there was the labor of getting

the fish to market. He did not overdraw the picture of the hardships they would have to endure, and wound up by declaring that if they went into the business he would stick by them.

"Well, Harry," said James, "I will promise you that we will not go out to the nets when you think it is too risky. I want to know if you think we can catch enough fish in this way to make money." If they could, he was not afraid of the cold or the hard work, for, he told the old man, if they were going to have anything in this life, he guessed they would have to work hard enough to obtain it.

"I am going to see Mr. Knapp tomorrow, and I will talk it over with him. If he advises us not going into this business, we will drop it. I believe, however, that it is up to us to handle it properly and we will make a success of it."

The question of keeping a horse during the winter months was discussed, and this part of the programme met with no opposition. Harry told them he had seen a lot of old planking floating in the river that very morning, and he believed the Paterson Plank Road Bridge, that crossed the river about three miles from where they were located, was being repaired. If this was true, they could easily obtain material enough out of which they could build a stable. James told him that he and Frank must gather up as much of this wood as they could find, as there would be plenty of use for it. James had left the work of trapping and shooting entirely in the hands of the boys and Old Harry. We will now return to them and see what success they have met with.



## CHAPTER XXI

### VISITS FROM THEIR CITY FRIENDS

The season had arrived when the skin of fur-bearing animals was at its best, and the Hull boys had over one hundred traps working. Half of these were visited on alternate days. It had become quite a difficult matter to locate the spot where they had placed every trap. This trouble had been partly overcome by tying a small piece of red rag on the reed near where the trap was set. When the trap was changed or removed the rag was also changed, but even with this precaution they would very frequently discover that they had failed to visit all of them. So fast did the skins accumulate that they were obliged to make arrangements with Mr. Sanger to take them off their hands. He had the roof of his New York store fitted up for a drying place, and the top floor of the building as a storeroom, this enabled them to send the skins to him quite green, and they would make a shipment every two weeks.

They had also been told to draw on the firm when in need of money. They were glad to take advantage of this, for the experience that they once had in having their money stolen had taught them a lesson. Every morning they would go duck-shooting, and they never failed to bring home a nice bunch of them. They shipped one hundred and twenty black and mallard ducks to market during the two weeks that they had been in their new home.

Clinton Knapp had spent the first week with them, and he said that he had the best time of his life. It

also seemed to improve his health, and his father was very anxious to have him return to them, and arrangements were made to have him do so.

Mr. Sanger was notified to come up for a few days' shooting, and they received a note telling them that he would be up the following Wednesday. They also received from him a small keg of gun-powder, caps and fifty pounds of shot. The note was attached to one of the bags. It requested James to meet him at the dock at 5 p.m. on that afternoon. Mr. Sanger was at the appointed place on time, but James was surprised to see that his partner, Mr. Chapin, was with him. He apologized to James for coming, but said that when Mr. Sanger had suggested it he could not resist the temptation. They stowed their baggage, guns and fishing tackle away in the boat. It was just getting dark, and our friends started for the Home Afloat, and as they rowed down the creek they saw plenty of evidence of the sport that was in store for them on the morrow.

Flock after flock of ducks were flying low over the meadow, seeking a roosting place for the night and to be on the feeding grounds in the morning. On a moonlight night, if you had stood on the top of the Palisades, you could have heard the whistling sound made by the wings of these ducks as they flew from the Sound and bays of Long Island over the hills and alighted in the waters of this sportsman's paradise, and we have no doubt but what there is still living on the island of Manhattan many an old-timer who can testify to having enjoyed a fine day's sport on the Hackensack.

The three miles from the dock to the scow were soon rowed, and as they neared the scow they scented

the odor of fish being fried. This sharpened their appetites, and after looking around, inspecting the skins, ducks, and the general arrangement of things about the place, they were ready for supper. At the table James partly described the work he had on hand and informed his friends that they would have to excuse him from going out with them in the morning, as the work could not be neglected. He told them Frank and Harry would see they had all the sport they wanted. This did not please them very much, but as James was firm in his determination to stick to the work, they soon recognized that they would have to make the best of it.

They were busy preparing their guns and things for the morning's sport, while the boys and the old darkey prepared the boats. Old Harry was very busy with the duck boat; they waited a whole hour for him to appear. He, at last, brought the boat to the trestle, and as he made it fast he declared she was fixed 'bout right.

The boat was inspected with the aid of the light from the lantern, and it was found that the old man had certainly made a change in its appearance. It did not resemble a boat, but looked more like a mass of floating hay and reed. Mud had been placed on the boards at the sides, also on a portion of the bow or deck. Into this mud he had placed short pieces of reed. Hay had been spread on the deck and sides. This was kept in place by weights and rope which were hid from view by the hay being partly pulled out from under and then allowed to fall over them. Weights, to act as ballast, were also placed under the deck; these, with the weight

of the occupants, would sink the boat so low that not more than two or three inches would remain above the level of the water. The surface of the water in the creeks and river at this season of the year was covered, more or less, by floating hay and reeds, carried along by the receding tide, and so accustomed had the ducks become to seeing it that they paid very little attention to it. Thus a boat fitted out as above described, with two men in it, could often approach within fifteen feet of a flock before they would take flight. It is at this time that the shooter would get in his deadly work.

When approaching a flock the shooter would bend down on his knees, with his gun in position for instant action, while the other man would lie down on his side and with the oar he would skull and guide the boat noiselessly through the water.

"Well, Harry," exclaimed Mr. Sanger, addressing the old man, "what is the program for tomorrow?"

The old man immediately assumed an air of importance and replied: "You see, dere hab bin so much shooting for de pas' free weeks dat de ducks hab become awful skeery, an' Ise specs dat Massa Frank an one ob you gemmens had better take de stools [decoys] an gets on shooting pint, while Ise an de oder gemmen will take de boat an stir dem up in de meadow; when we shoots de ducks will fly ober where Massa Frank is, an dey can help demselves."

"You are a great general, Harry," said Mr. Sanger; "and as you have the campaign all marked out, we will follow your advice."

Frank and Mr. Chapin were to go to the point, while Harry and Mr. Sanger used the duck boat.



It is not necessary for us to follow our friends through the details of the morning's sport; we will simply state that the boats returned to the scow by ten o'clock a.m. In the bottom of Frank's boat were eighteen ducks, while the party in the duck or skull-boat had thirty-eight. This was accounted for by the boat party being able to go to the ducks, while the party on the shore was obliged to wait until the ducks came to them.

The work of looking after the traps was next in order, and this left the gentlemen from the city to entertain themselves for the afternoon. This they did, preparing their fishing tackle, and taking one of the boats they were soon on the river enjoying this sport. When they returned to the scow, Mr. Chapin announced that he would have to return to the city that evening. Sadie prepared the supper, and after partaking of it, James, the two gentlemen and Will Barker, set out for the village. Barker was to accompany Mr. Chapin to New York to help carry the game.

Mr. Sanger and James started to return. The boat had not proceeded far, when James was startled by hearing his companion exclaim:

"James Hull, I want you to stop rowing and allow the boat to drift with the tide. I want to have a long talk with you; it is to be more than a business talk and we must be alone. One of my principal objects in coming to see you at this time is to discuss the subject which I am about to present. Both Mr. Knapp and Mr. Chapin know what we are about to discuss. Mr. Knapp has been at our store quite often of late, and has been most urgent in his request that we talk this

matter over with you. I want to tell you now, that I find a change has taken place in yourself; within three months you have changed from a boy and become a man. The others, Sadie and Frank, depend upon you; wherever you lead, they follow. It is therefore up to you, my boy, to choose a proper path for all. I know that there is something weighing on your mind, and I have made a guess as to what it is. You are well aware that you cannot long continue to live in the manner that you are now doing; you are all young as well as ambitious. In a short time the novelty of living in these meadows will have worn away, and you will all become dissatisfied. I will therefore ask you what you may consider an impertinent question, and kindly bear in mind that an answer is requested, not only by myself, but by others, who stand ready to aid and assist you. What is your object in life? At what goal are you aiming?"

## CHAPTER XXII

### A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

The business proposition that Barker had suggested was laid before Mr. Knapp. He did not altogether approve of it, neither did he advise their not going into it. He could plainly see from the manner in which James had spoken, that he had practically decided to try it.

"Very well, James," he said, "I will do all I can to aid you. I do not think it will be necessary for you to purchase a horse. Out there in my barn are five horses, and three of them will not have a thing to do until next spring. I will be glad to have you take one for his keep during the winter months. You will also require a set of harness, a wagon and an old sled, all of which will be ready for you by the time you have the stable prepared. I will tell my man, John, to have them ready when you call for them."

James also called upon the owner of the woods and by paying him the sum of twenty dollars he obtained his permission, in writing, to cut as many trees as they might require. Barker and James had cut a large quantity of the coarse meadow grass. This they had carefully stacked, and as the frost had killed all vegetation, and the wind had dried the grass and reeds until it was like tinder, large fires were a nightly occurrence on the meadow. The Hulls had burned all the grass and reeds that surrounded the Home Afloat. This precaution was necessary, for notwithstanding the scow was in the water, it was no protection against the ravages of this monster. The cutting of the grass could not prevent

the spread of the flames, for they would catch on the short dry stubble, and fanned by a strong wind, would spread with great rapidity; when the ground was once burned over the fire soon died out, for there was no food for it to feed upon.

The stable for the horse had been built. The boys, Frank and Clinton, had secured plenty of the old planks, even going far below the bridge to gather them. This they considered great sport. They would accumulate about twenty, make a raft of them, and when the tide was running in the right direction they would tow them home, by tying a rope from the raft to the stern of the rowboat. The floor of the stable was raised three feet above the level of the meadow by driving stakes in the ground. These formed the foundation for the building to rest upon. The building had been made much larger than they had at first intended, owing to their requiring additional storage room. A slanting runway extended from the sill of the door to the meadow. The place was made warm and dry by placing hay against the ends, sides and on the roof.

James and Barker, with the assistance of Old Harry, had selected the place in the river where they intended to set the poles and nets. They made careful soundings, not only to ascertain the depth of water, but also to find out the nature of the bottom. It was necessary that the bottom should be of a muddy character, to enable them to sink the poles into it. They finally located a spot about one hundred yards below the mouth of Bellman's Creek; this would make it quite convenient for them, on account of it being close to the house, which would be their base of supplies.

The woods had been visited, and thirty long, straight hickory trees had been cut down and trimmed. The bark had been removed and the whole pole made as smooth as possible. These poles varied in length from forty to sixty-five feet the shorter ones to be set close in shore, and the longer ones in the channel. A large supply of grape-vine was also secured, of which the rings were to be made.

Long, slim poles with a hook on the end had been cut. These were to be used for reaching down into the water and hooking the ring, thus enabling them to draw up the ring and the bottom of the net. All these were ready, waiting for the meadow to freeze hard enough to bear the weight of the horse, so that they could be hauled to the river bank.

This was hard work for James, but so great was the energy and determination that he applied to it that Will Barker found it very difficult to follow the pace he set. It was these qualities combined with his straightforward, manly way of doing business that had attracted the attention of Mr. Sanger and his partner, and caused them to become interested in the welfare of this family.

We have recorded about all the incidents that have taken place in the lives of the Hull boys, up to the time Mr. Sanger requested a reply to his question. As James sat listening to Mr. Sanger, his elbows were on his knees, and his chin was resting in the palms of his hands.

"Mr. Sanger," said James, "your question is one that has often occurred to me and I have not answered it satisfactorily to myself as yet. My first object in this

life is to earn sufficient money with which to purchase a suitable home for my brother and sister, as well as for myself. I feel that if my health is spared I will be able to earn money enough to maintain that home. You have now the only answer I can give to that question."

"Your answer, my boy, is as unselfish as it is noble, and I admire you all the more for it, but if you will allow me, I think I can suggest a plan which will work out much better to your advantage. This plan is what Mr. Knapp and ourselves have been talking over; may I proceed?"

James assured him that he would be thankful for any advice that he would offer, and requested him to proceed.

"Well," said Mr. Sanger, "in the first place, we want your services in our business. This will necessitate your giving up your present mode of living. Three years ago we lost, by death, the services of a valuable man, and we have never been able to fill his place satisfactorily. It was the duty of this man to visit the trappers and Indians in the West and Northwest, and purchase from them our supply of furs and skins. He had the confidence and respect of these people, and our house stood high in their estimation. The men who have tried to fill his place have practiced deception and abused their confidence to such an extent that we have lost prestige with them, and we are now unable to get the supply of skins that we require, and those we do get are of a poor quality. It is this position which is now open, and we feel that you are the man who can fill it satisfactorily. You could come with us either on

the first of May or first of June, and after spending two months in the factory, and two months at the store, you would have gained sufficient knowledge of the different kinds of skins to enable you at least to pay a visit to the trappers. You should spend the fall and winter with them, accompanying them on their hunting and trapping expeditions, thus gaining their confidence and recovering our lost prestige. This would also necessitate your parting from your brother and sister, a sacrifice you should make, not only for your own but for their sakes. We all think that Frank should have a few more years at school, and Mr. Knapp proposes that he should return with Clinton when he goes back to college. This will be a great opportunity for him to obtain a higher education, and I do not think that either you or Sadie will deny him. We are coming to the most important part of our plan, and I hope that it will meet with your approval. I refer to Sadie. Your sister can never stand the hard drudgery work that a life on that house-boat would entail. You yourself, I have no doubt, have observed this. We therefore, for her, have made the following provision. When the time arrives for you to join us, instead of buying a home with the money you will then have, we propose that you rent a small floor in the city. This to be used as a home only when you return from your western trips. When you are away Sadie will make her home with Mr. and Mrs. Knapp, as a companion for Fannie. Your money can be invested in good securities that will pay ten per cent. interest, and will, no doubt, double in value within three years. With this interest you can pay the rental of your floor, and the balance will partly

pay for Frank's schooling. I will not say now just what salary we can offer you, but I can assure you that it will be more than you can make here on the meadow. I do not expect you to give me an answer as to whether you will accept the position or not at this time. I want you to think it all over, and I know that you will want to talk it over with the others. We will, however, want our answer by the first of March, so that in case you do not accept, we can make other arrangements. If you meet with the success that I anticipate you need not feel under any obligation to us, for we will be fully repaid by your success, which means to us more than you realize. You have already aided us by giving us a large supply of skins from this meadow. This business can be placed in the hands of Old Harry, and I have no doubt but what he will see that this supply is not cut off."

As Mr. Sanger finished speaking, James thanked him for his kindness and said:

"I shall have to talk with the others about it, but you shall have my answer by the first of February. I do not want Frank or Sadie to know anything about this until after the holidays. Neither will it do for Fannie Knapp to know of it, for I doubt if those two girls could keep a secret from each other, no matter how hard they tried. They are both good girls, however, and nothing is too good for them."

"Especially Fannie," said Mr. Sanger.

"Well, you can have your own way about that," replied James, "but I heard them talking over their plans for the winter, and I learned that it is Mr. Knapp's intention to take his family to the city during



the months of January, February and March. Fannie was trying to persuade Sadie that she ought to go with them. I should certainly be pleased to have her go. We could get the services of Will Sisco to look after the household duties while she was away."

They were approaching their journey's end and Mr. Sanger had announced that he would put in one more day shooting and fishing before returning to the city. James also declared that he would have to pay a visit to the city to buy the nets and supplies for their fishing business. On the following day Mr. Sanger had what he called a fine day's sport. He secured a fine bag of ducks, and visited the traps with Harry, Clinton and Frank.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### HIGH TIDE ON THE MEADOW AND ITS RESULTS

The first of December was near at hand, and the proverbial turkey had been obtained, and was waiting for Thanksgiving day. James and Old Harry had been to the city, and a full supply of netting, ropes, twine. knitting needles, oilskin clothing, etc., in fact, everything that they thought they would require for their winter work was purchased and delivered at the Home Afloat. The cold northwest winds were blowing and Old Winter had begun to assert his rights. Thin sheets of ice would form on the water of the creeks and river, only to be broken up by the rise and fall of the tide. Two of the boats had been hauled out of the water, and iron shoes or runners had been placed on the bottom of each. This was done so that they could be used on the ice. A large hand sled had been built for general use. James had not neglected to provide his family with proper clothing for the work. High hip rubber boots, warm pea jackets, gloves, and caps that turned down over the ears and face, leaving no portion of the face exposed, except the eyes, nose and mouth. All these he had secured and given to each of the men and boys.

Old Harry and Barker were busy semming in the nets. They were the only two who could do this work. They had both served time at it, on the Hudson River, fishing for shad.

James, Frank and Clinton were attending to the traps, and they found it hard, cold, disagreeable work. The meadow was frozen hard, and Clinton had brought the horse, wagon and harness down to the

stable. The two boys were using the horse every day, hauling the large fishing poles from the woods to the river bank, while James sharpened the butt ends. The grapevine was also being formed into rings.

When Thanksgiving day arrived it found the work so far advanced that very little was left to be done. The weather up to this time had been all that could have been desired. The Indian Summer had been perfect, but a change had now taken place. The sky had been overcast for two days, and a storm had been threatening. Fannie Knapp was spending her Thanksgiving at the Home Afloat. The storm broke during the afternoon, and the rain came down in torrents; so hard did it blow and rain that she was compelled to remain over night, and never will these two girls quite forget this Thanksgiving night, for they were certainly frightened, although James and Old Harry did all they could to calm them. The heavy rain beat against the house, and the wind and waves threatened every minute (when the tide was at its highest) to drive the houseboat over the top of the stakes that surrounded it. Barker and Sisco had slept in the stable, and they were not troubled much by the storm. As the tide receded the boat rode much easier, and our friends were able to get a few hours' sleep.

When morning came Old Harry told James that they must get busy and make the boat more secure. The storm had not abated, but seemed to be more severe than ever, and he was afraid that the next tide would be much higher than it was during the night. The tide only receded about half way; this was caused by the wind blowing up the river and holding the water back.

The streams and brooks were all pouring their waters into this valley from the hills, and with the change of tide the water would sweep up from the bay. James saw the logic of the old man's reasoning and soon decided what to do.

After breakfast, all the men folks were told to get into their oilskins and rubber boots, and assist in lashing the scow to stakes that were to be driven in the meadow. The stakes that surrounded the scow were examined and found to have worked loose. If the braces had given way, the Home Afloat would have been driven over the meadow and possibly into the swamp.

These stakes were driven deeper into the mud. Ropes were attached to the scow and run out to the stakes that had been driven in the meadow, where they were fastened. A slight strain was put upon the ropes that were on the side from which the wind blew, while on the opposite side they were left slack. This permitted the scow to rise with the tide, and at the same time it relieved the pressure against the stakes on the windward side. After three hours' hard work they were satisfied that they had so secured their house that there was no danger of its being carried away.

The tide had changed and was now running in. When this occurred the wind and rain appeared to increase in violence. Notwithstanding this, James announced that he was going to see Mr. Knapp, as he knew that both Mr. and Mrs. Knapp would be worried and anxious about their children.

Both Old Harry and Barker said that they had never been out in such a hard storm, and advised that he wait

until it abated. He was determined to go, and Barker offered to accompany him.

After cautioning Old Harry to look after the welfare of those in the Home Afloat, he and Barker set out in an effort to reach the village.

During the journey of three miles their boat was driven, by the force of the wind, against the bank of the creek time and again. They at last fought their way to the dock, fastened their boat where they would be able to get it on their return, and started on their walk to Mr. Knapp's, where they finally arrived in a wet and bedraggled condition.

James assured the anxious parents of the safety of their children. He told them what precautions had been taken to make the boat more secure, and then declared his intention to return to the meadow. Mr. Knapp ordered dinner to be prepared for them, and insisted upon their changing their wet coats for dry ones. He also ordered his men to get the team and closed carriage ready to take them to the dock, where they had left their boat.

After enjoying the hot meal and receiving the thanks of Mrs. Knapp, with an added request to take good care of her boy and girl, they entered the carriage accompanied by Mr. Knapp, and were driven toward the dock. When driving along the road they had a full view of the meadow, and they could see that the tide had already covered it. Mr. Knapp declared that they would not be able to make their way to the Home Afloat against such a strong wind and tide. James simply replied that they would have to fight their way to it if it took them all the rest of the afternoon. They were

soon at the road leading to the dock, and as it was covered with water the horses would not go through it; they were obliged to get out, and bidding Mr. Knapp good-by, they waded through the water to their boat. Once in the boat, James settled down to row, while Barker used the long shoving pole to force the boat against the head wind.

They found it was impossible to make any headway by keeping the boat in the deep water of the creek, and they decided to try and force their way over the meadow by using the pole and oars. By doing this they were able to make better progress. Often they were obliged to stop and bail the water out of the boat. For two and a half hours did these two men push and shove that boat. Often would they see the top of a stake projecting out of water, and when they had pushed their boat up to it, they would make fast and get a few minutes' rest.

Only once did Barker speak of giving up, but when he heard what James had to say on that subject, he willingly resumed the struggle.

At last they could see the outline of the house through the mist and rain. They redoubled their efforts, and after fifteen minutes more of the hardest kind of work, they made the boat fast to that part of the trestle nearest the scow. Clinton and Frank rushed forward to assist them, for they could plainly see that both were completely exhausted, and required help in leaving the boat. The girls had hot coffee ready for them, and after drinking this, they recovered enough to remove their wet clothes and put on dry ones. Never had either of them passed through such a trying experience.

The tide had arisen to a great height, there being a depth of two and one-half feet of water over the entire meadow.

That part of the trestle nearest the shore had been carried away by the wind and tide. Old Harry had seen the danger, and he and the boys had fastened ropes to that part next to the scow, and by tying the other ends of the ropes to the large stakes that formed the dock, they had managed to save that part of the trestle upon which the storage boxes stood. It was the weight of these boxes that had aided in preventing this half from following the other. During the afternoon the wind changed and began blowing from the northwest. The rain ceased, and the tide was receding from the meadow. It was not until this happened that the occupants aboard the Home Afloat felt secure.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### PREPARING TO FISH THROUGH THE ICE

The next morning, when our friends arose, they found that the northwest wind had brought an additional amount of cold with it. The creeks were covered with ice, and the meadow, which had been softened somewhat by the water, had again been frozen hard. Will Sisco had agreed to look after the housekeeping; Sadie, Fannie and Clinton started with the horse and wagon for Mr. Knapp's, where on their arrival they received a joyous welcome. The thermometer registered four degrees below zero.

Old Harry predicted that they would be able to begin putting the fish poles through the ice the following day if the weather conditions remained the same. Everyone was now well wrapped up in their winter clothing and all appeared to enjoy the cold. The two boats, that had runners on them, were hauled to the bank of the river, where they were made into a catamaran. The boats were placed side by side about twelve inches apart. Three long stakes, five inches in diameter, and long enough to reach across both boats, were placed in position, one at the bow, one in the middle and one at the stern. These were held in place by lashing them to cleats on the inside of the boats. They now had the two boats made into one. The boys entered into the work with great zeal, for it was play to them, and they only found fault when the older and more experienced hands could find nothing for them to do.

Harry cautioned the boys to be very careful about

going on the ice, especially did this apply to the ice nearest the shore. He also told them of the wind holes they would find in the center of the river, and begged them not to risk too much until these were frozen solid. The old man had seen them getting their skates ready for the morrow and had become uneasy. He was quieted by James, who said:

"We think too much of your advice, Harry, to take any risk, and we will promise not to put on our skates until you say so. We only hope you will not hold us off too long, for we have been talking about the long runs we will have on the river. We expect to skate up to Clinton's house some evening. The girls can come down to see us during the afternoon, and we can take them home by the way of the river on the sled."

"Ise knowd a way yous can hab more fun as dat," replied the old darkey.

The boys were all attention, for they had learned to respect any suggestion that the old man would make, and they begged him to let them know what it was.

"Yous has all heard ob dem ice boats, an Ise specs dere is a young fellow what libs at Hackensack, dat made one last year, for Ise seed him go scooting up and down dis ribber las winter and Ise sartanly specs dat my boys can make one jes so good as hisen."

The old man showed them how the boat was made. He drew an imaginary triangle on the floor with a stick and showed them where the runners were placed on the forward corners of the wooden frame, as well as the swivel runner on the rear corner. He also told them he could have his friend Simon Dobson (who

owned a blacksmith shop in the village) make the runners and other iron work for them.

The boys were delighted at the thought of being able to sail on the river on one of these boats, and before they retired for the night, they voted that they would build the boat as soon as possible. Bill Barker and Old Harry were out on the river the following morning by break of day testing the ice and marking out where they were to set the poles. They found that there was four inches of solid ice, which was plenty strong enough to sustain the weight that was to be placed upon it.

Returning to the shore they were busy placing the ice tool, rope, etc., in the improvised catamaran, when the boys put in their appearance. The boats were hauled down the bank and placed in position to receive the load of poles. Will Sisco's voice was now heard calling them to breakfast.

When they returned to their work, two of the largest and longest poles were selected. It required the united strength of all to get these out on the ice. Once there, the butts, or heavy ends, were placed on the catamaran, and the poles worked or slid along so that their whole weight rested on the boats. In doing this work both James and Clinton had received a good ducking. They had stepped off the planks that had been placed in position for them to walk on, near the shore where the ice was thin and weak, and so suddenly did the ice give way that they lost their balance and sat down amid eighteen inches of water and broken ice. They had hardly regained their feet, when their clothes froze, for it was bitter cold, and they were obliged to run for the

Home Afloat, where, with the help of Barker and Frank, the frozen clothes were removed. Here they were left to thaw out, and put on dry clothing, while the others rejoined Old Harry. It was just as well that the incident happened, as it taught the boys to be more careful and showed them the danger there was in connection with the work.

By the time James and Clinton were again out on the river, the others had drawn the catamaran, with its freight, to the location selected and placed it parallel with the long line that had been scratched in the ice; one boat was placed on each side of the line. It was necessary to anchor the catamaran securely to the ice, which was accomplished by running lines out from each of the four corners, and fastening them to sticks placed across the holes, underneath the ice.

By running the lines out at an angle of forty-five degrees and drawing them as tight as possible, the catamaran could not be moved in any one direction before slacking up on one or more of them. The most difficult part of the work was at hand. It was placing the poles in a perpendicular position through the ice, and forcing the sharpened butts into the mud.

A slit or canal, eight inches wide by six feet in length, extending from the center to the bow, and between the boats, was cut through the ice. The pole was drawn back so that the end was at the center of the boats directly over the canal. All hands now seized hold of the thin or lighter end of the pole, and when they had raised it to such a height that it caused the sharpened end to point toward the canal at an angle, they pressed forward and the pole commenced to slide

toward the water. When about ten feet of the end had entered the water, Old Harry told them to hold fast while he took a double turn with a rope around the pole and center cross stake. A chance to get a few moments' rest or breathing spell had arrived, and the boys were glad of it, for notwithstanding they had on good gloves, their hands were very cold, and they had to slap them against their body to get them warm. While they were doing this they were instructed as to the next move. They were told to force the thin end of the pole upward, and when in a perfectly upright position, Barker would give the signal, Harry would loosen the rope and the pole would shoot downward into the mud. This part of the work was carried out to perfection. The pole being of green wood and very heavy, it went through the water to the bottom like a piece of lead. The pole was now worked back and forth, in order to loosen it in its muddy bed, and was raised up and down as often as possible. This is called "churning it in." When the pole had been worked into the mud as deep as it would go by this process, another method was used to force it down still further. A strong stake was lashed across the pole, at a point three feet above the boats. The top of the pole had the appearance of being a cross stuck into the ice. All hands leaned their weight upon this cross stake and the pole was forced further down. Harry and Barker climbed up the pole, and with their feet on the stake, they took their positions, one on each side, with the pole between them, while the others held the stake level, and then commenced to jump up and down on the stake, at the same time keeping their position by holding fast to the

top of the pole. As they jumped, all hands shouted the following words in unison with the jumping, "Down, down, down, down with it, down, down, down." This is called "jumping it in." In this manner the pole was forced down until the cross stake struck the boats. The stake was then raised three feet higher and the same method repeated, until the pole at last refused to be forced down another inch. Barker measured from a mark that he had made on the pole and announced that it was in the mud eight feet, which was ample for their purpose. The first pole was set in the channel of the river, and a space of fifteen feet was marked off from this pole along the mark Old Harry had made in the ice. This located the position of the second pole. The anchor lines were loosened, the catamaran was drawn to its proper position and the second pole was set in exactly the same manner as the first one. When this had been accomplished our friends found that the noon hour had arrived, and gathering up their tools they hauled the catamaran to the shore, and were soon enjoying their dinner. Other work was taken up during the afternoon, for Old Harry had announced that the traps would have to be gathered and brought to the scow, all but a few that were to remain on the higher part of the meadow, where they had been set for mink. They set out drawing the sled and one of the boats that had been used to make the catamaran over the ice, and were soon busy at their work. Notwithstanding there were five of them, it was long after dark before they returned to the scow.

The next day it was too cold to work out on the river, and no poles could be set that day. There was,

however, one incident that happened, that is worth recording. Fannie Knapp had a small dog, whose name was Joe. This dog she had brought with her to the Home Afloat on her last visit, and had taken him home when Sadie and Clinton went with her in the wagon. To the surprise of every one, the dog turned up at the scow during the day. He had evidently decided that he liked the meadow much better than the upland, and had found his way back to the Home Afloat. He was a half-bred fox terrier, and as it proved afterward, very fond of hunting for muskrats. Every day Joe would catch one or more of them, and bring them to Old Harry to skin. He was as quick as a flash and ever ready for a frolic or a tramp through the meadow.

To show the almost human intelligence displayed by this animal we will relate an incident that happened about one week after he had installed himself in his new home. The old darkey, who was usually the first one up in the morning, opened the door and let the dog out for his usual morning run. In a short time he heard Joe barking furiously. Harry put on his hat and coat and upon going out he found the dog down by the river acting in a very excited manner. He looked out on the river and saw a small animal making his way toward the other side. The dog was afraid to go on the ice, for it was very slippery. He no sooner saw Harry go on than he, too, rushed out and was racing toward the animal. As he came upon it, he seized it in his mouth, catching it by its back, and both the dog and mink (for such it proved to be) went sliding along the ice. Joe was soon on his feet with the mink still

in his mouth. He tried to kill it by shaking it, but every time he shook the mink, his feet would fly from under him, and down on the ice they would fall. After trying this several times, he stood still for a few moments, and then stretched himself flat on the ice, and started to flap the mink back and forth, so that the animal's head would strike the ice. In this way he pounded the life out of it. So pleased was Old Harry at this exhibition of intelligence that it was many a day before the old darkey ceased to talk about it. The dog also proved a valuable addition to the hunting force.

The traps having been removed from the usual trapping ground, some of them were set in the ditches and creeks close to the Home Afloat. As this ground had not been worked before, they found it very prolific. The boys would often take Joe with them on their rat-hunting expeditions. They would find a rat's house, remove the top by chopping it off with an axe. This would expose the runways. Joe being small and thin, would crawl into these runways, driving the rats before him. There was only one way for them to go, that was out through the subterraneous passages that led to the creek. When the tide was out, these passages were exposed, and the boys would kill the rats with a stick as the dog drove them through. Quite often they would get from five to twelve rats out of a house. These houses were built of mud and reed in a manner similar to a beaver's house. The cunning animals would build them at the junction of two creeks, about fifteen feet back from the edge or bank. They would dig the runways out to each of the creeks, and if their enemy,



the snapping turtle, should come up one of the passages, they would make their escape through the other. It was one of these turtles that very nearly caused the death of Joe. He had entered a runway and was soon heard yelping for help. The boys had to dig quite a distance before they could reach the dog. They finally caught hold of his hind legs, and giving a strong pull they drew him forth, with half of one ear missing. It did not take them a great while to determine what it was that had possession of the other half, for upon running their turtle hook into the runway they hooked out Mr. Snapper with the other half of the ear still in his mouth.

One week from the time that the first pole was set found all of them in position ready to receive the nets.



## CHAPTER XXV

### SKATING ON THE HACKENSACK

The ice on the river and creeks had become very firm, and Old Harry had given his consent to the boys that they might skate. Every evening they would slide off the Home Afloat on the ice, and dash out of the mouth of the creek, on the broad surface of the river.

James had been to the city and had purchased four new pairs of skates, one of them for Sadie, and the others for Frank, Barker and himself. Clinton's skates were new, he having received them the year before for his Christmas. The girls were often visited, and the sled was used to draw them over the ice to the Home Afloat.

Mr. and Mrs. Knapp had insisted on having Sadie remain with them. Sadie agreed to this, provided she could go home once or twice a week to look after the boys. Fannie claimed that she would have to go also to look after her brother. Fannie Knapp's pony, therefore, would often be seen crossing over the meadow toward the Home Afloat. It was also observed, by the others, that when they were skating James and Fannie would, in some way or other, manage to skate together.

Mrs. Knapp asserted that, as her boy was spending his time with Sadie's brothers, a fair exchange was no robbery.

Will Sisco was attending to all the housework, and proved himself to be a first-class cook and laundryman. Sadie always did the mending of the clothes, taking them away with her. The Knapp's family physician, from the city, had visited them. He made a careful

physical examination of Clinton, and was greatly surprised at the improvement in the boy's health. He insisted that if the boy could have three or four months more of the life he was then leading, he would be fully restored to health. Both Mr. and Mrs. Knapp were so elated and pleased at the report made by the doctor that they called at the Home Afloat the following day.

They had a long interview with James in reference to the expenses incurred connected with the Home Afloat, and wanted to pay what they termed their share of them. To this James would not listen. A few days after their visit he had cause to suspect that the fine hand of Mr. Knapp had been at play, for on his attempting to settle with Will Sisco, he found that worthy would not accept one penny for his services. The same thing applied to Will Barker.

The holidays were now approaching, and James was aware that Barker would need money. He offered him fifty dollars. Barker declined to take it, claiming that there was nothing coming to him, for as yet they had not caught or sold any fish. He finally showed James that he was not in need of money by producing a roll of bills from his pocket, and he ended the subject by saying that he and James could settle up at the end of the fishing season.

James next tried Old Harry, the result being the same, the old darkey declaring "dat nobody owed him nothing; if dey did he specs he ask for it mighty quick."

James Hull did not appear to be very well pleased at the turn affairs had taken. His independent spirit rebelled at being placed under what he called such heavy obligations. He debated the question with him-

self, as to whether he should protest to Mr. Knapp or not, and finally decided that he must have a talk with him. On the other hand, Mr. Knapp had determined the Home Afloat should have all the assistance it required, at least, as long as his boy was there, and he was to remain all winter.

Money was not to be considered if his only son was to be benefited, and what father would do less? He had taken Fannie into his confidence, telling her that he and her mother had noticed, when they were at the Home Afloat, what heavy inroads had been made in the stock of provisions, and he proposed to replenish them. "I want you and Sadie to help me. You must go there tomorrow afternoon if it is fine, and make the boys take you up to Hackensack. They have been wanting you to take this trip for some time, for I heard you talking about it. The boys did not come up last night, and they will surely be here this evening, when you can make all arrangements. Do not let them know what I am going to do. They will certainly be surprised when they return at night, for the team and wagon will have been there and left the goods. Tell Old Harry, on the quiet, to look out for things, and he will know what you refer to. I told him what I intended doing, and the old darkey knows how to keep a secret. Do not let Sadie into the secret until you are well away from the house; if you do she may spoil our fun by telling James. When they call this evening, if James should ask for me, tell him that I am slightly indisposed, and have retired to bed, which will be the truth. I want to take the early train to the city, so as to enable me to carry out my end of the program. I know that he has some-

thing on his mind he will want to talk about, but it will keep until he can see me." Mrs. Knapp also entered into her husband's plan and applied all the ardor and tact that only a mother can, when her children's welfare and happiness are at stake.

She met the boys that evening and extended an unusually warm welcome to them. As she sat in the large easy chair, with her arm around her boy's waist, she drew from him a full account of how he was spending his time at the Home Afloat. He gave a full description of how they were constructing the ice-boat, also of their long skating trips down the river, as far as Snake Hill, and up Berry's Creek, to the towns of Rutherford and Carlstadt, as well as on the Moonachie, Pawnpeck and Bellman's Creeks, these being the largest of the many tributaries of the Hackensack.

Can you imagine, you city boys, being placed on the ice of a river that is half a mile wide, with a clear stretch of black, hard smooth ice, extending a distance of eight miles, up and down the river, from where you are standing, having on your feet a pair of sharp new skates, and then compare it with the ice and crowded condition of your City Park Pond. If you can, you will have a pretty good idea of the sport that the boys on the Home Afloat were enjoying.

As Mrs. Knapp listened to her son's recital, she noticed the brightness of his eyes and color of health, surging through his cheeks, a silent prayer went upward from this mother, to her Heavenly Father, for the blessings He had bestowed on her boy.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Knapp journeyed to the city the following day, Mrs. Knapp going to Washington Mar-

ket to purchase goods, while her husband called on the firm of Sanger and Chapin to secure the services of one of their double trucks.

When he again joined his wife, he noticed she had added a great many items to the list that he had handed to her. When he jokingly referred to this, she replied that it was a good thing he had requested her to join him, otherwise, the boys would have been starved to death, if it had been left to him. The truck made its appearance and was loaded with two barrels of flour, one of sugar, two firkins of butter, a chest of tea, fifty pounds of coffee, a sack of salt, pepper, three barrels of potatoes, a large bag of dried beans, dried apples, prunes, preserves of all kinds; in fact, everything that could be thought of was purchased, and when the truckman started off the horses had all they wanted to do to draw the load. The distance to the Home Afloat was about ten miles. The goods reached there by three thirty o'clock in the afternoon. The truck was unloaded, the goods being placed temporarily on the frozen meadow, and it started on its return journey.

Barker, Sisco and Old Harry set to work with a will to get the things on board the scow. The heavy barrels could not be taken over the trestle, as it had not been built to sustain so heavy a weight. They were therefore rolled down on the ice, and then hoisted on board. Everything was stacked in the deck room. If the Home Afloat had not been frozen fast in its icy bed there certainly would have been danger in placing so great a weight in one place. It was nearly dark when the last article was placed on board, and the trio waited to enjoy the surprise that was in store for the boys.

The girls were ready waiting for the boys to call for them at the appointed time. The home of Mr. Knapp was located on the western slope of the Palisades, near what is now known as the town of Ridgefield. The house faced the old Englewood road, and it was only a short walk from the house to English Creek. It commanded a full view of the creek, and when the girls saw the boys coming, they ran out with their skates to meet them. All five were soon gliding over the ice. A strong wind was blowing from the north, and as our young friends turned into the river, they were obliged to skate against it. If it had not been for the assistance given them by the boys, the two girls never could have made the trip.

Upon arriving at the town they removed their skates, visited a number of stores, purchasing a few things that could easily be placed in their pockets. The walk soon dispelled the fatigue caused by the hard trip up the river. The journey down the river was in reality a treat. The wind carried them along at a rapid pace, and in half an hour from the time they left, they were again on English Creek, although it had taken them two hours to reach the town.

As Fannie arose (James having removed her skates) she drew forth from her pocket a letter, and holding it in front of the young man, said, "Here is a note for you, from father, but I am not to deliver it unless you promise not to open it until after you have reached your home." James made the necessary promise, secured the letter, and placed it in his pocket. The boys tried their best to get Fannie to divulge what was in the letter. She did not know exactly, but she found



it great fun in teasing them by pretending that she did. So persistent did they become, that the two girls finally made a break for the house, shouting their good-byes to the boys, who remained on the creek, watching them through the twilight until they had safely entered the house.

The contents of the letter was the topic of conversation as they skated down the creek. When they turned onto the river, with their faces toward the south, James and Clinton shot forward. These two were about equally matched as to speed, Clinton being the more graceful, while James made up in strength what he lacked in gracefulness. Poor Frank was soon left behind, and James was the first to call a halt in the race on his account. They waited for Frank to catch up, and the three, joining hands, with Frank between them, fairly flew over the glistening ice.

From a distance, far up the river, their eyes caught sight of the Home Afloat. It was certainly illuminated, for there was a light at every window, which made the house stand out like a beacon amid the wilderness of reeds and ice. This discovery only increased their curiosity still more, and caused them to skate the faster.

The watchers at the house could hear the ringing sound made by the steel runners of the skates, as they left the ice at the end of each stride, this sound being caught up by the wind and wafted on far in advance of the skaters, thus making them aware of the boys' approach. The skaters dashed into the creek from the river, James leading the way.

As they opened the door of their house old Harry exclaimed, "Well, Massa James, Santa Claus hab sar-

tenly got round dis year a leetle bit ahead of his time." The boys looked at the pile of goods and then at one another. James was about to ask for an explanation, when he thought of the letter in his pocket. Removing cap, coat and gloves, he opened the letter, which read as follows:

English Neighborhood, Dec. 19th, 1865.

To our boys at the Home Afloat.

My Dear Boys:—The goods that you will find at the Home Afloat upon your return are a Christmas present to you, from myself and Mrs. Knapp, and I know you will accept them solely in the spirit in which they are presented, at the same time remembering that all good gifts come from above. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I remain,

Your Sincere Friend,

F. M. KNAPP.

James read the letter aloud, and said that he would send a letter of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Knapp in the morning. The articles were examined, each package being marked "Home Afloat, Bellman's Creek & Hackensack River, N. J." A large, fine turkey, weighing twenty-six pounds, was greatly admired, and hung from the rafters in the deck room. The barrels of potatoes were opened, the vegetables emptied into bags, and they were stored in the hold, with such other articles as could be stored there, leaving only a few things, such as the flour, sugar, etc., that would not be injured by being frozen.

Clinton was to visit his parents the next day, and to be the bearer of the letter of thanks to his father and

mother. James and Frank were to spend the day in the city, as they wished to do some Christmas shopping.

The next morning, on visiting the city, they first called on the firm of furriers, and were immediately shown into the private office. James noticed that there were others waiting to have an interview with the heads of the firm, and he could not understand why they should be favored above the others. When he requested Mr. Sanger to explain this, he was much surprised at his answer, which we give in full: "You see, James, we have a man in our employ whose duty it is to find out the business of every one who enters this store. When you entered the front door I was immediately informed of that fact. There is not a man in our employ who does not know of the success you boys have made of the trapping business, and when you come to see us, you naturally attract their attention. We, at the present time, owe you something over two thousand dollars. This fact leaks out through the office, as the books are open to half a dozen clerks. I would not tell you these things if I did not believe you are going to accept the offer I made you, and that you will be with us next spring. There are men, waiting outside, who would like to make your acquaintance. They would like to secure some of the fine rat and mink skins from the same source from which we get them, and we believe that it is to your advantage not to have you come in contact with these people at the present time. We have to throw out every safeguard to protect our business interests, and this is one way of doing it. You do not realize how greatly the demand for mink furs has increased this winter, and you boys have

helped us out to a great extent. In fact, you have enabled us to meet all the demand that has been made upon us by the users of consuming trade, while our greatest rivals have gone short, and they have been trying to find out where we get the fine skins from, that you have been supplying us with. Mr. Chapin and myself concluded that we were under a great obligation to you boys, for you have certainly given our prestige a boost in the trade. We therefore wish to show you our appreciation of what you have done for us, and I now take this opportunity of doing so." With this Mr. Sanger opened a drawer in the side of his desk, and drew forth three small packages. Two of these he handed to James, requesting him to give one to Old Harry and the other to Frank. As he did so, he remarked that they were to be considered as Christmas presents from the firm. "I do not wish you to think we are making an exception of you boys by giving you these presents. It has been our custom, ever since we have been in business, to present to each of our employees, at the end of the year, a slight token of our appreciation of their efforts in our behalf. These tokens have been graded in value according to the services rendered, and it is our experience that it pays to do so, for it acts as an incentive to those who receive a present of lesser value, to make a further effort to gain a higher regard in the estimation of the firm. When an employee has done this, it is certainly incumbent upon the part of the employer to recognize it. I want you to remember, James, that, if the time ever arrives when you are in business for yourself, not to treat your employees in a parsimonious manner, but

raise yourself in their estimation and esteem, by recognizing their merit in a substantial way. Make your employees feel that you have a further interest in them than the squeezing of all the work out of them you can get, and only paying them a stated amount for it at the end of the week. If you do this you will find that you will be repaid tenfold. If you keep those in your employ happy and contented, they will work more willingly, be more eager to serve you, and guard the interests you have entrusted to them with zealous care. The servant who is morose, sullen, and discontented is very apt to be careless and disinterested in his work. He will only give as little of his labor or ability as he can in return for the pay you give him, and thus you will become the loser in the end.

"The presents we have given you are of a greater value than we generally distribute to our own men. They all know that you are to get them; they also know why you are to have them, and that they are well deserved. I do not believe there is a man in our employ who begrudges them to you; if there is, I want to know it, for that man is not loyal to the best interests of this business, and we cannot afford to have such a man with us for any great length of time."

James had been very much interested in what Mr. Sanger had been telling him, and as he paused, James asked if he might open the package. Mr. Sanger readily assented to his doing so. When he removed the wrapper and opened the box, he certainly was astonished. Lying before his gaze was a handsome gold watch.

That the boy was confused and embarrassed at the

sight does not express it. Frank had taken it for granted that he might also examine his present, for he opened his package at the same time, and found a duplicate of the one that had been given to James.

As soon as the boys had regained their composure, they thanked Mr. Sanger for his kindness, and requested him to extend to Mr. Chapin their thanks also.

The boys found engraved on the inside of the back cover the following inscription: "Dec. 26th, 1865. Presented to James Hull, By Mess. Sanger & Chapin, wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year." The same inscription was on Frank's, and also on the old darkey's, with the exception of the name, the name on Old Harry's being "Harry Benson," which was the old man's right name. After giving their friend a full account of how they were getting along at the Home Afloat, and drawing such a sum of money as they thought they should require, they took leave of their friends at the store, to attend to their Christmas shopping. They first visited the jeweler's and purchased a small lady's watch and chain for Sadie, a gold locket for Fannie, and a cane for Mr. Knapp.

They decided to have the girls select a suitable present for Mrs. Knapp, as they were to do their shopping the latter part of the week. They next called at the gun store, and bought a fine Smith & Wesson revolver for Clinton. They had often heard him express a wish to have one. For Old Harry, Barker and Sisco, they bought a fine supply of shirts, socks and underwear. We will not weary our readers with a detailed description of how our friends enjoyed the holidays,

leaving to their imagination the surprise and joy of the old darkey at receiving the watch, and the explanation as to why it had been given to him, also the spending of Christmas at Clinton's home, and the exchanging and presenting of the Christmas gifts to each other. All these enjoyments, or those of a similar kind, our readers have no doubt participated in. We will therefore turn back in our narration to the time and point where the occupants of the Home Afloat were preparing to embark in the fishing business. Up to this time the weather had been all that could have been desired; no snow had as yet appeared to mar the beauty and smoothness of the ice.





## CHAPTER XXVI

### BUILDING AN ICE BOAT

Fifteen of the thirty trees or poles that James and Barker had prepared had been placed in a row through the ice, and were waiting to receive the nets. Old Harry had advised against their placing the nets in the river until the conditions became more favorable.

A cold Northwest wind had been blowing steadily for the past two weeks, and he maintained that they must have an East wind before they could expect a run of fish. A week had gone by since the poles had been placed in position, and the boys' patience had become exhausted. James insisted that they must try and ascertain if there were any fish in the river or not.

"We can at least learn how to handle the nets," said James. It was therefore decided to put three nets in place, one on each end and one in the middle of the row. To this plan Harry and Barker agreed, although both said that they would not catch any fish. The grape-vine rings, with the weights attached, and the nets were brought forth. The ice was cut away from pole to pole, and was found to be about eighteen inches in thickness. The rings were slipped over the top of the poles and the lines attached to them were fastened to the bottom corners of the nets. In doing this they carried the bottom of the net with them. The other armlines were fastened to the top corners of the net, the ends of the lines being tied to the pole, the net passed down underneath the ice and spread out in such a manner that it reached from pole to pole.

All the spare time that the boys had of late, they

used to build the ice boat. During the week just passed they had been able to make considerable headway toward its completion.

A strong isosceles triangular frame, made of oak planking eight inches wide by two inches thick, with a similar plank bisecting the triangle extending three feet beyond its vertex and two feet over the base line. This plank was an important one, for it not only carried the mast, but the movable runner as well; the steering wheel was to be fastened to it. The seat and weight of the helmsman would also be upon it.

The end projecting over the base line was to act as a bow-sprit, to which an iron brace was to be fastened to help support the mast. The few lessons in drawing that James had received from his father had taught him the advantage of working from a plan. He had aided his father in building the scow, and had noted how everything fitted together just as it had been planned, and shown on the drawing. He had drawn a plan of the frame, and Frank, Clinton and Barker shaped out the lumber, while Old Harry was dispatched to the shop of his friend with paper templates of the irons required to reinforce the joints. When these were obtained, the whole frame was securely fastened and bolted together. The plan showed the frame of the boat, elevated about eighteen inches above the surface of the ice, with the two forward runners riveted into iron triangles that were eighteen inches high. The bases of these triangles were bolted to the underside of the frame, about twelve inches from the extreme corners. These two forward runners were placed in a position parallel to each other. The runners were made

of flat iron, four inches deep or wide, by three-eighths of an inch in thickness, and two feet in length, the front parts being curved upward. There were two triangles on each runner, one on the front, the other on the extreme rear. The plan did not show the arrangement of the rear runner, or of the steering mechanism. It was designing these necessary adjuncts that gave our hero more trouble than all the rest of the plan combined.

Our readers will bear in mind that James had never seen an ice boat. He had only a vague idea of how one should be constructed, and he proceeded to put this idea into practical shape and form. He applied all the thought, ingenuity and perseverance, so characteristic of our American youth, to the work, and finally met with success, which is the reward of meritorious effort.

James found it necessary to visit the blacksmith's shop while the iron runners were being made. While there he discovered the very article he had been trying to design. It is what is known as the fifth wheel of a wagon. He found it in a heap of old scrap iron, that the smith had ready to sell to the first junk man that should happen that way. In a few seconds James was the owner of that fifth wheel. He was soon seated on a stool with a piece of board on his lap, and with pencil and paper he commenced to make a drawing of the steering or stern runner. The colored smith watched him as he worked, and before the drawing was half completed, he had grasped the meaning of it all, for his friend, Old Harry, had told him what the boys were doing with the iron work he made for them. By the time the drawing was finished, the man had the

triangle and runner made. So much was he interested in the work, that he would run back and forth from the forge to where James was working, after he had placed his rule on the drawing, to get the measurement he wanted. The wheel was twenty inches in diameter, and the base of the triangle had to be made of a corresponding length. The triangles had been riveted to the runner, and James placed the bottom part of the wheel on them, showing the smith how he wanted it fastened with countersunk head bolts. The top part of the wheel was properly drilled, and the same style of bolts made for bolting it in place. A long thick bolt was made to act as a king bolt; this passed through the center of the wheel, its head being welded and riveted to the runner; on the other end of the bolt was a thread and nut. This whole mechanism, runner and all, was to be directly under the helmsman's seat. It took the whole of the forenoon to complete the work, and as James placed it in the wagon, he felt that he had at last solved correctly, part of the troublesome problem. He paid the smith his bill, and drove toward his home, in much better humor than he had been in for some time.

The nets that had been placed in the river had been raised and examined at least a dozen times. Very few fish had been found in them, and the nets had all been removed with the exception of one, which was to be examined once each day. The boys were somewhat disappointed at this showing, but as the ice boat was nearing completion their interest in it increased, and they bore their disappointment with good grace.

It had become known throughout the village that the boys at the Home Afloat were building an ice boat, and each day a number of men and boys could be seen wending their way over the meadows to pay them a visit. This became quite a nuisance, especially so as the number increased from day to day, in the hope that they might be present at the trial trip. In this they were to be disappointed, for James had decided to make the trial trip early in the morning. He knew very little about sailing a boat, and nothing whatever about sailing an ice boat; he therefore did not care to go on exhibition until he had mastered the handling of the boat.

The day after the making of the steering runner found James in the city for the purpose of purchasing supplies, fittings and rigging for the boat. He called at a ship chandler's store on West Street. Here he met a clerk, who took great interest in selecting the proper sizes and styles of the numerous fittings that were required. When James told him that he wished to purchase a complete rigging, he handed him a pencil and paper, at the same time requesting James to draw a rough sketch of the frame of the boat on the paper. While this was being done, he asked a great many questions, thereby learning that his customer had only a vague idea of what he would require. The man was very busy writing on a paper pad; this he continued to do long after James had finished his drawing. When he had finished writing, he handed the paper to James; it proved to be a list of articles, with the price marked opposite each item. The whole list totaled up to the sum of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. James

noticed that the list contained a mast, boom, one large and one small sail, blocks, cleats, ropes, thimbles, and many other small articles. He requested to be shown the mast, boom and sails. They climbed the stairs to the top floor of the building, which was used as a sail loft. Here they inspected the sails and James noted the length and diameter of both the mast and the boom. They were about to go down the stairs, when he caught sight of a small drum and steering wheel, in an iron frame. It was standing against the wall on one side of the room and was partly covered up with old sail cloth. As he stood examining it, the clerk told him that it had been ordered and paid for, by a gentleman who had a yacht. This man had failed to call for it, and as three years had passed, he would sell it for four dollars. James told him to add it to the list, which he did.

They now adjourned to the office or first floor, where the list was handed to James. He inquired of the man why he recommended his buying the two sails. The man replied that they would not be able to handle the large one, and it was better and much safer to learn to sail the boat with the smaller sail. "Well," said James, "we will have to learn to use the large sail, and as it can be double reefed, we will do without the smaller one," and he drew his pencil through this item. In a like manner he treated the items of mast, boom and some of the rope, remarking as he did so, that he had enough of these at home to answer his purpose.

He requested the man to get the goods ready, also an itemized bill of the same and he would look up the

expressman. He found the expressman at his office, and told him to call for the goods in about one hour's time. After purchasing a few things they required at the house, he returned to the ship chandler's store, and paid the bill, which amounted to sixty-five dollars only, it having been reduced to this amount by eliminating the items heretofore mentioned. While waiting for the expressman, James showed the young salesman how they proposed to use the steering wheel and drum. The seat of an arm chair was to be bolted to that part of the center plank that supported the steering runner and fifth wheel, while the iron frame that held the wheel and drum would be bolted to the plank at the vertex of the triangle. The two tiller ropes were to be wound around the drum, running in opposite directions to each other, or in such a manner that when one unwound, the other would wind up on the drum. A piece of joist, four inches square and sixty inches long, was bolted to the frame, with its ends projecting about two feet beyond each side of the steering drum. On this joist the guide pulleys were to be placed, and the tiller ropes would run through these with their ends run back and fastened to the heel or rear of the steering runner.

The young man declared the plan for steering the boat was a perfect one, or could easily be made so with very little experimenting. James had transacted all of the business that had brought him to the city, and he was at the roadside that afternoon with the horse and wagon waiting for the expressman. In due time the goods arrived at the Home Afloat, and the boys were kept very busy for a whole week, getting the boat

ready for the trial trip. The dressing, or shaving down of the mast and boom, placing them in position, as well as the fitting on of the sail was work of a most interesting character, and certainly kept the excitement in our boys keyed up to a high pitch.

The boat had been built or set up on the surface of the ice of the creek, and here we shall leave it for the present, ready for its trial trip.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### FISHING THROUGH THE ICE PROVES A GREAT SUCCESS

One morning, during the holiday week, Barker and Old Harry had returned from lifting the nets. They brought with them a bushel of fine white perch and bass. This was welcome news, and all hands were soon busy placing the balance of the nets in the river. Old Harry had announced that there was going to be a big run of fish, for the east wind had been blowing for two days, and the tides had been rising higher and higher each succeeding day. The old darkey's predictions were fully verified, for at the very next tide, when the nets were hauled, the boys were treated to a sight that caused them to dance with delight. The bottoms of the nets were drawn up through the slot and laid on the ice. Hundreds of fish could be seen, either caught in the meshes by the gills, or swimming in the bag of the net. The top of the nets was pulled up through the ice, and the fish were thrown out. So great was the quantity of fish in the bag that it was necessary to enlarge the slot in the ice, to allow the net and fish to be drawn through it.

It took the united strength of four of the men and boys to draw up a net. Frank, in the meantime, had been despatched to the house and barn to get the sled and a number of barrels. He and Will Sisco, who had come out to help, were busy placing the larger of the fish in the barrels, while the smaller ones were thrown back into the river. As fast as each net was emptied of its load, it would be allowed to slip back into the water under the ice. In placing the fish in the barrels,

each kind had been kept separate, the catch mainly consisting of perch, bass and catfish.

The boys found that the lifting of the nets was hard, cold and disagreeable work. Their mittens would become wet and freeze into a mass of ice on their hands, but by watching how the old darkey and Barker managed to keep their blood circulating, they, following the example set them, found they could stand the strain and cold as well as the others.

Several large sturgeon were caught in the first day's haul of the nets. These were taken possession of by Old Harry, who made or improvised a smoke-house out of a whiskey barrel. This he did by removing the heads and placing sticks across the midsection, or bilge, The lower part of the house was built of blocks of turf cut from the meadow, the outside being plastered over with mud. This part was round in shape, and about three feet in height, the top part being arranged so that the barrel could be set upon it.

One of the heads that had been removed from the barrel was bored full of holes, and was used as a removable cover, or roof. The old darkey had cleaned and dressed the meat of the sturgeon, each piece being rubbed with salt, and then hung with a wire hook to the cross pieces in the barrel. A fire was started on the floor, and just enough air was admitted to cause it to smoulder and throw off smoke; this would pass up between the pieces of meat, and out through the holes in the cover. This smoke-house proved a perfect success, and others were built just like it. The total of the first day's catch was as follows: Eight hundred pounds of perch, one hundred and fifty pounds of

bass, fifty pounds of catfish, and twenty pounds of sturgeon. The perch brought eight cents, the bass twelve, and the catfish five cents per pound in the New York market. James Hull was a very busy young man during the following week. The nets had to be lifted twice in every twenty-four hours, which necessitated considerable night work. He was obliged to employ three additional men, and the force of help was divided into two shifts, one for day work, and the other for night work.

He also visited the city and made arrangements with commission merchants, both at Fulton and Washington markets, to handle such fish as he would ship to them. The shipping of the fish, and getting it to market quickly, had to be attended to. The small shipments were made by the local express, while the larger ones were made by the railroad. Those that were shipped by rail had to be followed up, as they were perishable and would soon spoil if allowed to remain in the hands of the railroad for any length of time.

Money now began to flow in from the sale of the fish, and James kept an accurate account of all money received, and expended, in the interest of the fishing business. He also created great enthusiasm among the others who labored with him, by showing them that he had divided the business into two interests; one he called the Hull, and the other the Barker interest. The Hull was to be a three-quarter, and the Barker a one-quarter interest.

All money expended for nets, twine and general equipment, was to be deducted from the whole, before any division was to be made. Clinton, Frank, Sadie,

Old Harry, and James were to divide the Hull interest and the Barker interest was to pay for the extra labor and any food they consumed. This arrangement seemed to please every one connected with the Home Afloat.

At the end of the first month, when the first division of the profits took place, no one appeared to know what to do with the money that James handed to them. At his suggestion, they all agreed to open a savings bank account, and Barker was the first one to accompany James to the city for that purpose. Each of the boys in turn did the same, but when the old darkey was asked about it, he was very reluctant to part with his money. He was finally persuaded to do as the others had done. This led to a revelation of the contents of the old man's chest.

He had been something of a miser, but when he received the first year's interest on his bank account, he began to think it was time that all his money ought to be there.

As James was away at the time, he sought the advice of Mr. Knapp, who examined the hoard, and found it consisted of old coins, shin-plasters, and postage stamps. Some of the coins were rare, and of very ancient date, and these he sold to the best advantage. Altogether, the old darkey had saved up a total of about eight hundred dollars, mostly in copper coins, all of which was eventually placed to his credit at the bank. He was never known to draw out any money, and his bank book showed that he never did, as he declared "dat it was de wrong way to save it."

Two years after he had made his first deposit in the

bank, he evidently wanted to know if he could get his money at any time that he chose to draw it out. James accompanied him to the bank on that occasion, supposing the old man wished to make a deposit, and was very much astonished at hearing him demand his money. James, who was well known to the officials of the bank, entered a private office, and explained to them what he thought the old man meant to do with the money. They paid it as quickly as possible. Harry brought the money to James, requesting him to count it. When he found that it equalled the amount James had told him it would, he walked up to the receiving teller's window and redeposited the whole amount, with an addition of fifty dollars. The teller inquired of Harry if he found his money all right, to which the old darkey replied that he had, and that was the reason he was giving them the other fifty. This little by-play on the part of Harry made him a marked man, and he received afterward a little more consideration from the clerks whenever he called at the bank. His account was a joint one, it being in the name of Harry Benson and James Hull. This was at the request of the old darkey, who carried the bank book on his person.

Mr. Chapin and Mr. Knapp were directors of this bank, and it was not long before every person in the institution was acquainted with the history of the occupants of the Home Afloat.

The work of keeping the nets in repair was causing James great annoyance. He had been compelled to purchase double the quantity of nets, owing to those that were removed from the river being badly torn or damaged. This damage was done by the large stur-

geon. These large fish, when seen in the water, resembled a shark in appearance. They would see the small perch and bass in the bag of the nets, make a dash at them, and pass clean through the nets, ripping and tearing the nets to pieces with their fins and tails.

Two of these large fish were caught during the season, their total weight being six hundred and fifty pounds. They had been carried along by the tide, and laid sideways against the nets; when the nets were hauled in they did not move, but when they had been placed upon the ice, they thrashed around until they became exhausted.

No one was better pleased than Old Harry at this catch. It meant more smoke-houses, but it also meant more sturgeon meat. All of this class of fish that had previously been caught, measured from two to three and one-half feet in length. At the end of the season they had shipped a trifle over fifteen hundred pounds of smoked sturgeon, for which they received eighteen cents a pound.

The large striped bass, some weighing as heavy as twenty pounds, had to be handled in a like manner. They apparently enjoyed being hauled against the tide; it seemed to lull them to sleep, but the moment they reached the air they would commence to struggle, and our fishermen were compelled to act quickly to prevent their escaping.

The fishing firm of Hull & Barker dissolved partnership on the first day of March, 1866. At that time, William Barker found that he had on deposit at the bank the sum of six hundred dollars.

This was more money than Barker had ever dreamed

of possessing, and it seemed to bring to life the ambition in this youth that had been lying dormant.

His association with the Hull boys had been of great value to him. It had taught him to be self-reliant and persevering. He had not only regained his self-respect, but also the respect of those who had previously shunned him.

Whether his ambition to accumulate money was ever realized, we shall have to leave to the opinion of our readers, who will be aided in their conclusions by incidents related in the concluding chapter.

The total profit of the Hull interest amounted to eighteen hundred dollars, each of the five participants receiving the sum of three hundred and sixty dollars. It was agreed to leave the equipment, such as nets, poles, ropes, etc., at the Home Afloat, to be used or disposed of at some future time, and in such a manner as James alone should decide.

Notwithstanding the busy time, and the amount of work that our boys had been doing, they never neglected to properly observe the Lord's day. Every Sunday would find them at church and Sunday school. No nets were allowed to remain in the river on that day, they being removed the previous Saturday evening, and fresh ones used in their place on the following Monday. The work of looking after the traps had also been attended to, principally by Frank and Clinton. These two boys had the meadow between Little Ferry and New Durham, on the east side of the river, pretty well covered with their traps, and as the Home Afloat was centrally located on this strip, it did not take them long to visit one-half of them each day. The supply

of skins that was being shipped to the firm of Sanger & Chapin was thus maintained. Mr. and Mrs. Knapp, Fannie and Sadie had removed to the city for the months of January, February and March. The boys would call to see them whenever they visited the city. James had given Sadie money enough to properly replenish her wardrobe, to conform with the surroundings in which she now found herself. Her health had improved, and her brothers were very proud of her. No two girls ever enjoyed a winter's season in the city more thoroughly than they did. Sadie had her income from the fishing business, which was paid to her on the first of every month, and she certainly found no difficulty in spending it to the best advantage.

James Hull had written to the firm of Sanger & Chapin, accepting the position they had offered him. He had, also, advised his sister and brother of the arrangements that had been made regarding their future, and to which they readily agreed. The disposal of their interests at the Home Afloat we shall leave for another chapter. Old Harry and James had talked their affairs over, and neither of them seemed to be much concerned about the disposal of this asset.

We will now take our readers back a few weeks in the history of the Home Afloat, to the time when the ice-boat had been completed.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### LOST IN A SNOWSTORM

During the construction of "The Flying Harry," for such was its name, it having been chosen in honor of the old darkey, who had first proposed building the boat, three ice boats had made their appearance on the river. These had come down from the town of Hackensack. As their occupants had stopped to watch the fishermen haul their nets, the boys had a chance to make a very minute examination of how they were built and rigged. The frame of their own boat was much heavier, and they were of the opinion that they had, in the Flying Harry, a much stronger and stauncher boat.

The names of the three boats from up the river were, "Jack Frost," "Snow Flake," and "Icicle." Very appropriate names, but this did not add to their sailing qualities. Their owners had no idea that they were soon to have a rival; they could see the mast of the Flying Harry standing up above the reeds in the meadow, but they supposed it was the mast of an ordinary sailing boat. The boys watched the rivalry, or tests of speed between these boats, with great interest. As the boats reappeared from day to day, it could be seen that something had been added to their rigging which was intended to increase their speed.

The stepping or fastening of the mast to the frame had caused the boys considerable trouble. It was accomplished by making a long tenon on the bottom end of the mast. This was mortised into the center plank of the frame, a hole was bored in the part of the tenon

that projected through the plank, and a stout wooden pin driven into it, thus keying the mast to the frame. Heavy iron knees forming a step were used, one angle of the knee being bolted to the frame and the other to the mast. An iron clamp or ring was placed around the mast three feet from the bottom and four iron braces extended from this clamp to the frame, one on each side, one to the bowsprit, and the other to the center plank.

The mast was properly guyed, small two-sheave wooden blocks were used on each guy, for convenience in taking up the slack.

The fitting of the sail was the most difficult task of all. The sail that James had bought was entirely too large, and had to be cut down.

The boom, gaff and sail were spread out on the smooth ice of the creek, and with the proper measurement taken from the mast, they succeeded in cutting out a well shaped sail. The cutting of the canvas necessitated a lot of sewing, stitching and hemming, and the boys had sore finger tips when the job was finished.

The trial trip of the Flying Harry was on a moonlight night. The boat was taken out on the river and tied to one of the fishing poles. A fairly stiff wind was blowing and the boys were somewhat afraid to make a flying start. The sail was hoisted but double reefed. Clinton, Frank and Barker had their skates on, and James was at the helm. The word was given to cast off, and the boat shot forward down the river. The skaters were soon left far behind, and James and the boat passed out of sight. In five minutes they reappeared, the white sail could be seen shooting back

and forth across the river, as it was being steered against the wind.

The skaters could keep up with it now, and as the boat came up to the fishing poles, James threw the bow of the boat up in the wind, thereby emptying the wind out of the sail, and it was again made fast to the pole.

As James stepped out of his seat on to the ice, he exclaimed, "Isn't she a daisy? You ought to see how easy it is to handle her, that steering gear works like a charm." He was delighted at the fine showing made by the boat and he hardly knew how to express his satisfaction. Old Harry and Sisco had come out to see the trial made, and they also were well pleased. The boat was inspected to see if anything had loosened or become strained. The guys were found to have slackened; this was taken up, and James announced that they had better put the boat to a more severe test. "We may as well have something give way to-night, as at any other time, if it is going to do it, let us shake out a reef, and the rest of you boys get aboard, and we will try her out." A lighted lantern was hung to each of the end poles of the fishing row, to enable them to avoid running into them.

The reef was shaken out, and the sail drawn taut. Frank was stretched out over one forward runner, Barker over the other, while Clinton took up his position under the forward brace, at the foot of the mast. Everyone was cautioned to hold on for dear life. As James undid the slip-knot that held the boat, she jumped forward like a hound loosened from its leash. The two miles to the Secaucus Bridge were soon cov-

ered, and here they were obliged to turn. Not a word had been spoken, and it would not have been heard had it been, but as the turn was made James inquired if they were all right, back came the answer, "Aye, aye, Sir," from all three of his passengers and the Flying Harry started on her zig-zag trip up the river, receiving a salute from the two darkies as they passed by them. James worked the boat well up the river before he turned for the run down; he wished to have a long run, and he now had a straight one of six miles in front, with the wind astern. The wind had freshened, and as the boat turned, it felt the increased pressure and darted away like a frightened bird. Faster and faster they flew; as they sped along there seemed to be no limit to the speed, and James wished that he had not taken the reef out of the sail. He kept well over toward the west shore of the river, as he wanted to clear the fishing poles. It was well that he did so, for he did not see the light until they shot past it. A few seconds after passing the poles, James turned the boat, but so great was its velocity that it skidded over to the east side of the river, and they had a very close call from being wrecked.

The boat soon gathered headway and tacked across the river. When they reached the anchorage at the poles, James brought her up in the wind; at the same time Clinton loosened the throat and peak halyards, and the sail came down on the run.

All the boys declared that they had quite enough of that kind of sailing for one night, and the Flying Harry was taken to her anchorage in the creek. The

trial trip was the principal topic of conversation at the Home Afloat during the balance of the evening.

James declared that they would have to make a number of alterations or improvements in the frame of the boat. "We will have to throw away that chair seat, and make something more substantial." "Yes," said Frank, "and I think that the fellow that lies out on the corner, ought to have something more than a narrow plank to lie on, and hold fast to. When we made the turn down the river, the runner under me seemed to be up in the air, and when it came down it struck the ice with such force that I almost lost my hold on the plank."

Barker here added his testimony to the difficulty he had in maintaining his position on the boat. Clinton said that his only trouble was that they traveled so fast, he could not see where they were going. "We want to add more weight to the frame, or reduce the sail area," declared James, "and I suppose that we make a strong trough or box, with one end open for the stern seat and make it long enough to accommodate two people, and with high sides it will make a much stronger and safer seat. We can also run braces from the center plank in front of the helmsman, out to the cross piece that guides the steering ropes. These will form a good-size platform at that point, if they are made of planking.

"When a gust of wind would strike the sail tonight, I noticed that the rear part of the boat would lift, and I would have to ease up on the sail, in order to bring the rear runner down on the ice again. These alterations will place the weight where it is most required.

We will also place small platforms on the forward corners, which will make it more comfortable for those who ride on that part of the frame. Frank and Clinton will have more use for the boat than I will. The greater part of my time will be taken up looking after our fishing interest, and you two chaps will have to tune up the boat. We want to beat those other fellows. I believe we have the boat than can do it, if we learn to handle it properly, and you boys will have to get busy and learn to do the handling. I will try and make arrangements for a race to take place the latter part of this month, or the first week in February.

Our boys were highly delighted, and they went to bed feeling that there was many a good day's sport in store for them in the near future.

On awakening the following morning, the occupants of the Home Afloat found that they were being treated to an old-fashioned snowstorm. The wind was blowing, and as fast as the snow fell upon the ice on the river, it would be swept off on the meadow. The storm lasted for two days, and when the sun burst forth, it found mother earth covered with a white mantle, upon which its rays had but little effect.

The saying that many willing hands make light and quick work, was fully proven by the boys. They set to work with their shovels, and soon had paths and space cleared of the snow, that enabled them to move around on the outside in comfort.

Although thirty inches of snow had fallen, it did not prevent our fishermen from attending to their nets. The catches continued to be large, and the shipments heavy. On the first day of the storm, James had followed a

shipment by rail to the city, well knowing that he would have trouble in getting it carted from the freight depot to the commission merchant, as it does not take a very heavy fall of snow to tie up traffic in the city of New York.

Being well clothed, and with his high-hip rubber boots on, he was well fortified against the storm, and by twelve o'clock he had succeeded in safely delivering the shipment. He next called to see his sister and the Knapps, entertaining them with a full description of the sailing of the ice boat.

Fannie made her father promise to take them out to the Home Afloat in the sleigh, declaring that they must have a sail on the boat, and it would be such a nice sleigh ride. They were to let James know, the next time he came to the city, what day they would go.

He also called on Mr. Sanger and that gentleman also insisted that he must have a ride on the Flying Harry. When he learned that the Knapps were going out with their team and sleigh, he said that he, Mr. Sanger, would take his horse and sleigh and make arrangements accordingly.

When James started to return home, he found the storm had increased in violence, and the trains had stopped running. He made his way across the Hoboken Ferry, where he was more fortunate in finding the horse cars were still able to make headway against the storm.

He alighted from the car at the plank road and started to walk the six miles to his home. Had he known of the peril and trials he was about to encounter he would never have undertaken the journey. The

storm beat directly in his face, but he pulled his cap down over his ears, and the flap covered his neck. Notwithstanding this, he could barely force his way against the storm. It was not quite dark when he approached the Three Pigeons tavern, at the foot of the New Durham hill, and he decided to enter and procure a cup of coffee and something to eat.

When he entered and made known his wants, the landlady hastened to comply with his request. He told the landlord who he was, and this man advised him not to attempt to walk the two and a half miles over the meadows through such a storm, but James told him that he did not believe he would find the heavy drifts of snow on the meadows, that he had encountered on the road. It was plowing his way through these that had exhausted him, besides those at the Home Afloat would be expecting his return, and if he did not return, they might start out to look for him. "No," he said, "I must go forward and that as soon as I can get a bite to eat." He would not accept the landlord's invitation to remain at the tavern over night, and after having been refreshed by the meal, he again resumed his journey. It was now dark, and this added to the terrors of the storm.

He did not find it difficult to keep on the road, it was the numerous and high drifts of snow, he had to force his way through, that delayed his progress, and gradually sapped his strength. He at last found his way to the edge of the meadow, where the path from the Home Afloat joined the one on the mainland. Here he stood for an instant, and shielding his eyes from the snow and wind with his arm, he tried to peer



through the whirling mass of snow, in hope that he might catch a glimpse of a light from one of the lamps, for he knew that they would place one at the window as soon as it became dark. Usually this could be seen from where he was then standing, but nothing now could be seen but flying snow, which seemed to bid defiance, as a fierce blast of wind would hurl it at him. He bent his head forward, so as to shield his eyes, and started to cross the meadow, keeping his face in the direction from which the storm blew, as he was satisfied that if he did this, he would soon come within sight of his home. On he walked; every once in a while he would try to discover the welcome light, which he knew was burning at the window for him.

His progress was now halted by a large creek. Nothing about the creek seemed familiar; he tried to decide on what part of the meadow he was, and concluded that this was the Paunpeck creek, and he was too far south. He turned and walked toward the north; presently he came to a small ditch. He did not remember crossing over this on his way down. What ditch was it? he inquired of himself. The only answer came from the howling gale, whose moans and howls grated upon his ears.

James realized he had become lost in the storm, and that he was in a dangerous position. He had been on the meadow over one hour, and for all that he knew he was farther away from home than when he left the mainland. Once he thought he heard the sound of a gun, and he listened for another report. He tried to decide what was the best thing to do, and he decided to follow the ditch, believing it would lead

him to the mainland. He had not proceeded far when he fell forward on his face; he had stepped into a muskrat hole in the meadow, the mouth of which was covered over with a thin coating of ice and snow. When he arose he found his face was bleeding and a peculiar numbness seemed to seize him. He determined to shake this off, and, leaving the ditch, he again took to the open meadow. Sometimes he would walk backward, and then bending low, he would turn and push forward in the teeth of the gale.

On! On! On he walked, ever looking for the light, which now meant so much to him. The very wind seemed to be laughing and howling at its prospective victim.

In his distress, James Hull did not neglect to appeal to his Creator for help and strength. Several times, during the three hours he spent on that cold, bleak, barren meadow, he knelt down, and with bared head he raised his voice in prayer to his Master thanking him for the blessings of the past, and requesting that he be guided safely to his home. His strength was nearly spent, and as he was making what he thought must be his last attempt to find his home he almost ran against a stack of hay. This stack James could not remember having seen before; he therefore had no idea where he was. With what remaining strength he had, he commenced pulling out the hay on the sheltered or windward side of the stack. When he had made a hole deep enough, he crawled in, where he certainly would have frozen to death. In this place we shall leave him in the care of his Creator.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE RESCUE. TESTING THE ICE BOAT

As darkness approached on the first day of the storm, Old Harry grew very restless and uneasy; he would often walk out on the trestle to look for the return of James. Supper was on the table waiting for him. The lights were placed at the windows, and he told Will Sisco to give the men their supper. "Dis am de wust storm we has had in years, an Ise specs we is all gwine to hab trubble tonight if Massa James do not show up putty soon. De rest ob you eat your supper. Ise has a lump in my frote, as big as an egg, and Ise knowed dat it means trubble."

While the others were eating, the old man was seen to leave the house, with a lighted lantern in his hand. Will Barker no sooner observed this, than he seized his hat and coat, and telling the rest to wait until they returned, he started out after the old darkey.

He soon was at his side, and they made their way across the meadow, as far as the mainland. Here they discovered what appeared to be fresh tracks made by rubber boots in the snow. These tracks showed that the wearer of the boots had gone out on the meadow, for the toe of the imprint pointed in that direction.

When they reached the meadow, all trace of the tracks had disappeared. Had they been ten minutes earlier, they would have met James, at the very spot where they saw the tracks. They knew that James was somewhere on the meadow, and they shouted as loud as they could, hoping that he was within sound

of their voices, and would hear them. They also tried to find other tracks, but did not succeed.

Barker wanted the old man to return to the house, for he could see that he was almost exhausted. He finally persuaded him to do so, by promising to renew the search at once, with the help of all the men at the Home Afloat.

When Barker left the house to follow the old man, the dog Joe tried in every way to accompany him, but Frank held him fast. The dog took up a position on a bench, by one of the windows, and showed by his actions that he, too, wanted to go out to meet James. Frank was obliged to box his ears to make him keep quiet, and in this he only partly succeeded.

As minute after minute passed, and neither James nor the searching party returned, both Frank and Clinton became worried. As one hour had passed, and the first searching party had not returned, Clinton suggested that they fire a charge from one of the guns. Acting on this advice, Frank took up one of the guns, and going out on the balcony, on the front of the scow, he pulled both of the triggers at the same instant. This was the report that James had heard.

Just as a second searching party was about to start out to look for the three missing men, Barker was seen coming across the trestle, half carrying and dragging the old darkey along. The door was thrown open, and willing hands assisted them to enter. Barker was still able to help himself, and after he had partaken of a cup of hot coffee, he declared that he was ready to start out again. He had a hard struggle in getting the old man back to the house. Old Harry, however,

was completely exhausted; the wind and snow had cut his face very badly. In his anxiety about James he had neglected, when he started out, to properly cover up and protect his face from the fierce storm.

Hot drinks were forced down him, his boots and clothing were removed, and he was rubbed until the circulation was fully restored. When the door was opened to admit Harry and Barker, the dog Joe was seen to dash out and disappear in the darkness.

All thoughts of him passed from their minds, as they tried to learn from the two who had returned whether they had found any trace of James. When they heard their report, nothing could hold Frank and Clinton back from starting out at once.

The second searching party consisted of six men—Barker, Frank, Clinton, and the three hired men. The sled and a blanket, as well as a revolver and the two guns, were taken along. A long rope was used, and each man tied to it and spread twenty feet apart. The men were to stretch out and cover as much ground as this spacing would permit. They started forward, the two end men carrying lanterns, and the whole line marching abreast covering a space of one hundred and twenty feet.

When they reached a distance of what they thought was about half way between the mainland and the river, they would fire a shot, and then listen, hoping to hear from James. First one would call out, and then another, making as much noise as possible. The wind blew, and at times it appeared as if it was trying to force them backward. They had made one entire lap, and were now facing the river. "Now," said Barker,

as they turned and walked once again toward the mainland, "we ought to find him on this trip." They shouted, fired more shots, and called him by name, but the only answer was the derisive moaning and howling of the wind.

Once more had they crossed the meadow, and once again did they face the biting blast, as they turned their faces toward the river. Forward! was the word that came from both Frank and Barker, who were on the ends of the rope; and once again the line of men moved onward. It had not proceeded far, when it was most unexpectedly halted by the appearance of Joe, who bounded forward in their midst. Here he set up a half howl and half bark, and ran toward the North. Frank was the first to grasp the dog's meaning. "Joe has found him," he shouted; "follow the dog." And at the same time he sprang forward.

So sudden was his movement that Clinton, who was tied to the rope and was next to him in the line, was jerked off his feet. Frank untied the rope that bound him to the others, and before Barker could stop him, he was off after the dog. The words and action of Frank put new life and energy into the actions of all the others, but the knowledge that his brother was somewhere on that meadow, and might at that very moment be freezing to death, lent strength to his body and speed to his feet. Oh, if I can only reach him in time to save him! With such thoughts as these, on he went, the dog dancing and barking in front of him.

Over ditches and across (what afterwards proved to be Bellman's Creek) they ran. The others were left

far behind, but they had no trouble in following the trail through the snow.

Straight toward the haystack did the noble dog lead this brother. Here Frank saw a pair of rubber boots projecting out of the hole. He called and shouted his brother's name, but received no answer. This made him desperate, and reaching into the opening, he seized James by one leg and an arm, and drew the body out of the hole. Laying it at the foot of the stack, he knelt down, and when he removed the cap from James' head, he could see that he had been wounded. The blood had congealed on his face and neck.

The others now arrived at the spot, and Clinton, who was the most composed, drew one of the gloves from off James' hand, and felt for his pulse. As he caught the slight pulsation in the wrist, he shouted that James was still alive. One of the men stepped forward, and bending down, he poured a liquid into James' mouth from a bottle that he had taken from his own pocket.

All hands were busy rubbing and slapping some part of James' limbs and body. In a few minutes he demanded that they let him alone. This only caused them to rub the harder. He next sat upright, and wanted to know what was the matter, and where he was. As his scattered senses were returning, one of the men thought that he would try and get a smoke. He leaned against the stack to protect the lighted match from the wind, and as he drew the match across his trousers, the lighted end broke off and fell into the hay. In an instant the stack was on fire. Their first thought was to extinguish the blaze, but as they felt the warm glow strike their faces, they decided to let it burn.

James was moved to a safe distance from the fire, and placed upon the sled, with the blanket wrapped around him. He also enjoyed the warmth from the blaze, and he was revived and benefited by it. He had only been in the stack a few minutes when Joe found him, and in fifteen minutes more the men were reviving him. He had swooned from over-fatigue and exhaustion. His being well clothed, and well protected from the cold wind by the hay, had prevented his body and limbs from freezing. It was evident that he was groping his way around on the meadow, while both the searching parties were trying to find him. He had traveled toward the north, while they had searched toward the south. This also explains why he did not hear the report of the guns when they were fired. It was owing to the sagacity displayed by Joe, that he was found so quickly, which probably saved his life.

Had he remained in the stack for another hour, in the condition in which he was found, he no doubt would have been frozen to death. When James had recovered sufficiently, the party started on its homeward journey.

James was well covered up in the blanket, placed upon the sled, and with Clinton and Frank doing the hauling, they made rapid progress toward their home. They lost no time in trying to find the right path, for Joe was out in front, leading the way, and telling them in his dog language to hurry up. Every now and again, Frank would drop his hold on the rope, to inquire of James if he was all right. It was with lighter hearts, and more buoyant steps, that the party faced the fury of the storm, as they fought their way



back to the Home Afloat, where they received a most joyous welcome from the two darkies, who danced in attendance upon James, and it was almost morning before they ceased in their efforts to make him comfortable. It was only when he had fallen into a natural sleep that the two sought their own beds.

All of the men received from James additional pay for the work that they performed on that night, while Joe received a silver collar, properly inscribed, to commemorate the noble act performed by this intelligent animal. Forever afterward he always occupied the post of honor in any event that transpired at the Home Afloat. No skating, hunting, or ice-boat party was complete without him.

When they would start out hunting or trapping, the boys would remove the silver collar and put the old collar on him. When this had been done two or three times, he could not be persuaded to leave the house unless this change had been made before going on one of these trips; neither could he be induced to enter the run of a muskrat with the collar on, but the moment it was removed, he would not hesitate.

James Hull was obliged to remain in the house the next three days, during which time Will Sisco dosed him with herbs, and drove the cold and soreness out of his limbs and body. At the end of that time, he had not quite fully recovered from his awful experience in the storm.

Three days after the storm, Frank and Clinton were obliged to drive a heavy load of fish to the city. They started with the horse and sled very early in the morning, and after distributing their load to the fish mer-

chants, they called at Clinton's home, where their recital of the incidents of the late storm brought tears to the eyes of both Mrs. Knapp and the girls. Sadie in particular was most affected, and insisted that she must go back with the boys. The story, however, had a different effect on Mr. Knapp. He called his wife out of the room, and told her to get Sadie ready, while he went to the livery stable for the horse and sleigh, as he intended to drive out to the Home Afloat at once, and look things over. "I can just as well take Sadie with me as not, and she will be better satisfied," he said. Mrs. Knapp agreed with her husband, and the two were soon on their journey. They enjoyed the ride very much, for the spirited horse carried them over the snow-covered road at a rapid pace. In one hour and a half from the time that they left the house in the city, they drew rein at the Home Afloat.

Mr. Knapp had brought with him tonics and medicinal preparations for strengthening, and when he saw James he was glad that he had done so. Sadie rushed forward, and clasping James in her arms, she gave vent to her anxiety in a flood of tears.

In a few minutes she had become composed, and proceeded to make a complete examination of the premises. "Come with me, Will," she said; "I am going to see how you have been housekeeping." They went through every room in the house, Sadie bestowing praise upon the colored man, for the excellent manner in which he had done his work. When they returned from their tour of inspection, James inquired if she had found everything to her liking. "I have," she said, "with one or two exceptions, and Will Sisco will attend

to them. I am particularly well pleased with the way he has looked after the wardrobe," she said.

The two boys had returned from the city, and after dinner they and Mr. Knapp accompanied the men to the river, where their visitor enjoyed looking at the interesting work of hauling the nets. He saw a fine catch of fish landed and prepared for shipment. He also inspected the ice boat, and declared it to be a work of great merit. The work of repairing the nets also attracted his attention. The torn nets were stretched out on stakes, and five men were busy knitting and mending the rents and tears that were in them. Every time that a haul was made, five or more of the nets would be sent to the repair yard, where Barker, old Harry and the hired men would put them in repair.

Mr. Knapp and Sadie spent five hours at the Home Afloat. When the time arrived for them to return to the city, Sadie was contented and willing to return. She did not forget to exact a promise from all of the boys that they would take more care of themselves in future.

Mr. Knapp also pointed out the danger there was in handling or sailing the ice boat. "You must promise me that you will not take her out when there is a high wind blowing, and if you see a squall coming up, lower the sail and fasten the boat to the reeds; do not take any chances of being injured or killed. Unless you promise this, I shall have to take Clinton home, but I know you boys will respect my wishes.

"The experience that James has just passed through has been a good lesson to you all, and we are all thankful it has done no harm. You, James, had better take

things easy for a few days. You can go out tomorrow, if the weather is fine." Admonishing him and warning the boys, he placed two large striped bass in the sleigh, and with Sadie returned to their city home, where their recital of how they had found things at the Home Afloat quieted both Mrs. Knapp and Fannie.

During the time that James was convalescing, he was busy making the new seat and additions that were to be placed on the frame of the boat. In one week's time he was again attending to his duties, and had fully recovered from the effects of his rough experience. In the meantime, Frank and Clinton had not neglected an opportunity to sail the ice boat. Frank proved to be the most expert and daring. Both at night, and in the daytime, the two boys were out with the boat. At the end of two weeks from the day of the trial trip, Frank had attained such skill in handling the boat that the others did not feel safe unless his hand was at the helm. No reef in the sail now for him. Under full sail, they would go skimming over the surface of the ice at terrific speed, while the people from the nearby villages, who had come out to look at the boat, would marvel at his daring and skill. The boat and the boy seemed to understand each other perfectly. It appeared to obey his every wish; even while going at full speed he would throw the wheel over, and the boat would spin around like a top.

Nothing seemed to please this young man more than to be out in a piping gale, with his boat fairly flying along, with only one runner at times touching the ice. The other boats had been on the river, but they did most of their sailing on Sunday, and as the Flying

Harry was never out on that day, a test of their sailing qualities had not been made.

One afternoon, when Frank and Clinton had gone to the city, James saw a sail well up the river. He knew one of the boats was coming down, and he determined to find out how their boat compared in speed with this one. Calling to Barker, he made known his intention, and they quickly prepared their boat for the test. James had one reef in the sail. He believed that his was much the faster boat, and he did not want to fully expose its speed until they had arranged for a race.

As the Flying Harry was pushed out of the creek on the river, the other boat, which proved to be the Jack Frost, the largest and fastest of the up-river boats, shot past them. The three men aboard beckoned for James to come on. The challenge was quickly accepted, and with James at the helm and Barker lying at the foot of the mast, the Flying Harry started after its rival. The other boat was fully a half mile ahead before the Flying Harry got under full headway.

In the sail down to the Secaucus Bridge they did not gain on the Jack Frost. When this boat met them, on its return trip up the river, James also turned his boat and a real race in windward work was under way. The Flying Harry soon proved to be the better boat at this kind of sailing, but what she gained in windward work James would lose through his lack of skill in handling the boat when making the turn or coming about.

The Jack Frost had all sail set, and James was satisfied, that if the Flying Harry could hold her with a reef in the sail, they could easily beat the other boat when they had all sail set, and with Frank at the helm.

Nip and tuck it was all the way up to the Hackensack Plank Road Bridge; first one boat would be in the lead, and then the other would gain the lead. The Jack Frost gained the bridge first and made the turn about fifty yards ahead of the Flying Harry. The wind had freshened, and as the Harry was turned, they started on the race down the river. It was some time before James could tell whether they were gaining or not, but inch by inch, foot by foot, their boat was surely lessening the distance between itself and rival. When they were opposite the Home Afloat, the Flying Harry was in the lead by a few feet.

Here they were cheered by the fishermen, and also by Frank and Clinton, who had returned. How these two boys wished that they were aboard that boat! Frank, in particular, stormed, and said it was a shame to humiliate the boat by putting a reef in the sail, and he nearly had a fit when he saw what bungling work James made of tacking back and forth across the river, but notwithstanding this handicap, the Flying Harry reached the fishing poles first, and here James stopped, to allow Frank and Clinton to take the boat. He also wished to hear the news from the city. The Jack Frost had come to a standstill, and the rival yachtsmen shook hands.

The owner of the Jack Frost, whose name was Ackerman, proved to be a true sportsman. He readily admitted the superiority of the Flying Harry, and as the two boats lay side by side, he pointed out the defects in his own craft, when compared with the other. When he learned that the boys had never seen an ice boat

before they designed and built their own, he was surprised.

He complimented them upon their turning out so excellent a craft, and said: "I give you full warning, I am going to steal a number of your designs and embody them in the alterations that I will make in the Jack Frost, and you will then have to look out, or we will show you our heels."

"All right," said James, "we will be right there at the finish, and what is the reason we cannot have a race next Saturday afternoon? You can get your boat ready by that time, and we can ask the other two boats to join us. The course can be from bridge to bridge, and return; twice over the course will make a distance of about twenty-four miles; just about the right distance to test all the qualities of the boats."

Mr. Ackerman readily agreed to what James proposed. He also suggested that each boat be allowed to carry all the live weight that it wanted to, but no ballast or dead weight be permitted. The turning of the stake boats to be from the right toward the left.

The race was to start at 3 o'clock p.m. sharp. Each boat to be held on the line, and all to be released at the discharge of a pistol, which would start the race.

Barrels were to be used as turning stakes, and the Hull boys were to see that the lower one was in position, while Mr. Ackerman agreed to look after the upper ones. Here there were to be two. It was the starting point and finish of the race, and the winning boat must pass between the two barrels.

James also suggested that they have a second race, to be held on Washington's Birthday. "That will also

suit me," exclaimed Mr. Ackerman, "for I believe that some one else besides myself will want to make alterations after we sail the first race. The judges were to be selected on the day of the race, and at the course.

As Mr. Ackerman started on his homeward journey, James changed his mind about permitting Frank to handle the boat. He told both boys to get aboard and he would explain. He took the seat at the helm, and as they followed the Jack Frost up the river, he said: "Frank, we want to beat this fellow next Saturday, and you are the one that will have to do it. He already thinks that he has us beaten in the handling of the boat, and I do not want him to think otherwise, but I know that you can show him a trick or two, and I want you to size up his ability, as we follow him up the river. We need not show our hand until the day of the race.

"You all heard what he said about changing his boat, and when we meet next Saturday, the two boats will be about equally matched, and, Frank, it will all depend upon you whether we win or not."

"All right," said Frank, "if we only have plenty of wind next Saturday, I will get even with him on that day; I do not like to be behind anyone, when I know I can be ahead; and we are surely behind now, and he thinks that he is beating us."

In a short time the boats arrived at the bridge, and as the draw opened, to allow the Jack Frost to pass through, Mr. Ackerman bid them good-day, promising at the same time to be on hand to give them a worse beating on the following Saturday.

Clinton announced, on the homeward trip, that the folks were coming out for their sail the next day, and



they would have to make proper arrangements for entertaining them.

The balance of the afternoon and evening was spent in making box seats over the forward runners of the boat, so arranged that the occupant could be strapped fast. Everything about the boat was examined to see that it was in perfect order. The sail was double-reefed, as it was their intention to give the elderly members of the party the first sail, and it was to be made as easy and pleasant a one as possible.

Will Sisco and Old Harry were busy looking after the culinary preparations for the guests, and every effort was made to make their visit a pleasant one.

The guests arrived at the Home Afloat by ten o'clock a.m. the following day. The horses were unhitched from the sleighs, and room made for them within the barn.

Hot lunch was served to the guests, and when the ladies had become settled and made comfortable, James proposed that the men folks accompany him out on the river to see the nets lifted.

This they did, and so interested in the catch were they, that they insisted on remaining until the last of the nets had been emptied. The fish dinner, that had been prepared by the two darkies, would have done credit to many a celebrated hotel chef.

It was enjoyed by all of the guests, whose appetites had been sharpened by the cold ride in the early crisp morning air. After dinner, the ladies declared they were ready for the sail. The sleigh robes were used, and Mrs. Knapp was placed in the seat over one forward runner, and Mrs. Sanger was placed in the other.

Mr. Sanger insisted upon taking his position at the foot of the mast, and Mr. Knapp was in the stern seat behind Frank, who was at the helm.

All were thoroughly wrapped up, with only their eyes exposed. They were also strapped fast, and could not have fallen off had they wanted to. When all was ready, the boat was taken out to the river, and the Flying Harry moved away, as gracefully and as easily as if it had been told to be on its good behavior.

"No lifting of the runners now, Frank," said James, as they glided away up the river. For one whole hour did their elderly guests enjoy the sport, and when they alighted at the Home Afloat, they declared that it was the most pleasant sport they had ever had the pleasure of indulging in.

It was the girls' turn next, and the boys shook the reef out of the sail. As they did so, the warning voice of Mr. Knapp was heard to say: "Be careful, boys, do not go too fast; remember that the girls are not accustomed to such fast sailing, and you may frighten them."

The girls, on the other hand, promised not to scream or become frightened, no matter what happened, and they certainly made good their promise. Up and down the river did they go, and the bird-like boat seemed to know it had youth for its passengers, and that youth demanded speed.

It was the folks on shore who became frightened at the terrific speed attained by the boat, but when they saw how skilfully and easily Frank handled it, they were assured that the passengers were in safe hands.

The girls would gladly have remained out a longer time, but it was growing late, and they were aware that

it was time to think of returning to the city. They therefore requested Frank to stop the boat and let them get off, when they again arrived opposite the house.

When they came to a standstill, Mr. Sanger said that Frank had not treated him fairly. "You will have to give me just one more sail, and the faster you go the better I shall like it." Mr. Knapp also wished to try the fast sailing, and once again Frank was obliged to put the boat through its fastest pace.

Twilight was approaching as the guests took their departure, promising that they would surely be on hand to witness the race on the coming Saturday.



## CHAPTER XXX

### : THE FLYING HARRY WINS THE ICE BOAT REGATTA

The eventful Saturday was at last at hand. The news that there was to be an ice boat race on that afternoon had become known far and near. The crowds had commenced to gather fully two hours before the race was to start. People who had never before been skating on this river took advantage of the event, by bringing their skates with them. The surface of the ice was covered with merry parties of girls and boys, and sleighing parties lined the sides of the road and stood upon the bridge.

The Flying Harry had been overhauled for the event. Her framework had been painted white, the iron runners black, while a new streamer or flag, with the words "The Flying Harry" on it, flew from the masthead, and the stars and stripes from a small pole at the stern.

The Knapps, Sangers and Chapins were at the Home Afloat for dinner.

Large crowds were coming across the meadow to view the race, and with the aid of field glasses, it could be seen that the lower stake or turning point was to have its share of sightseers.

The stake boat or barrel was in position with a pole projecting through the head, and a red flag was floating at its top.

Mr. Overbaugh, the hotel proprietor at the Secaucus Bridge, had agreed to act as judge and timer at this point; he was also given a copy of the rules under which the race was to be sailed.

James advised his guests to go up to the Hackensack Bridge, where he thought they would get the best view of the race.

As each owner of the boats was to select a judge, James had selected Mr. Knapp to act for him in that capacity. The whole party, with their horses and sleighs, drove up to the starting point.

It was a little after two o'clock p.m. when the boys with their boat started out for the race.

The crew of the Flying Harry consisted of Frank at the helm, James and the dog Joe in the stern seat, Clinton at the foot of the mast, while Barker and one of the fishermen were strapped to the seats over the forward runners. A high wind was blowing from the northwest. "Just the wind we want," declared Frank. "If we don't make those fellows fly today, I will miss my guess," he shouted as the boat started down the river.

They wished to go to that end of the course, to see if everything was all right. All the way down the course they were greeted with cheers, and it was evident that the Flying Harry was a great favorite at this end of the river.

As they stopped to talk to Mr. Overbaugh, words of praise, admiration and well-wishes could be heard. The coat of white paint had improved the appearance of the boat fully fifty per cent.

At half past two o'clock, the three boats from up the river were at the starting point, but the Flying Harry was nowhere in sight. Anxious eyes were often turned to look down the river for the missing boat. In five minutes more, three youths who had climbed to

the top of the draw on the bridge, announced that they could see her coming up the river.

Excitement now ran high. Mr. Knapp acting for the Flying Harry, drew for position at the starting line. He was most unfortunate, for he drew the most easterly position, which was considered to be a handicap of at least one hundred yards or more.

The Jack Frost drew the most westerly position, which was the most favored one. Thus the two larger boats were to be on the ends of the line, with the smaller boats between them. The Jack Frost had been improved. New runners, similar to those on the Harry, were now under the boat, and the frame had been strengthened and lengthened. Her owner was loud in his boasts of how he was going to win the race.

His boat was also to carry five men, the same number as the Flying Harry, and as their sail area was about equal, the boats would be evenly matched. His experience and skill in handling the boat, he said, would enable him to beat the others.

The crowd, however, were soon to have a good laugh at his expense. These boats had been sailing up and down the river, near the starting line, for the past two hours, and the people had watched each of the helmsmen handle his boat.

On came the Flying Harry, zig-zagging back and forth across the river. The only life aboard that could be seen from a distance, was the dog Joe, who was standing up with his forepaws resting against Frank's back. Everything else on the boat seemed to be either a part of the boat itself or its rigging.

There was no grasping at lines, or struggling on the part of the occupants, to maintain their positions on the frame. All appeared to be as composed and as comfortable as if they were out sleigh-riding.

As the boat drew nearer and nearer to the starting line, the people were amazed at the ease and skill displayed by the young helmsman in handling the boat, and when she swung around to take her position at the line (which Mr. Knapp was pointing out), a spontaneous burst of cheers greeted them. The most surprised person of all that assembly of people was the owner of the Jack Frost. The most excited and pleased persons were the two young girls, Fannie and Sadie. They could hear nothing but words of praise and admiration being expressed by the people, for the skill that the boys had displayed in building and sailing the boat. Even the dog Joe attracted attention. The story of the part he had taken in rescuing James from the storm, was told and retold among the spectators, and they now knew why the dog was such a privileged character.

The boats were at the starting line, each one fastened to a stake that had been placed in the ice directly behind each yacht. Each helmsman held the end of a rope in his hand, and was waiting to hear the report of the pistol that would start the race. The sails were drawing and the boats tugged at the lines to be released. It now wanted one minute of the starting time. Here the owners of the two smaller boats sprang a surprise. They certainly stole a march on the owners of the Jack Frost, and the Flying Harry, by dropping spinnaker booms and setting spinnaker sails. They



had barely time to complete this work when the pistol was fired and the race was on.

A mile from the starting point there was a slight bend in the river, and Frank was obliged to work his boat more to westward, in order to clear the point of land. Every one wondered what the trouble was with the Flying Harry. Once around the bend in the river their wonderment ceased, for they saw the boat leap forward with increased speed, as she, for the first time since starting, caught the full benefit of the wind.

The other boats had obtained a commanding lead, especially the Icicle and Snowflake. These light boats, with their increased spread of canvas, were drawing away from the Jack Frost, which was about one hundred and fifty yards ahead of the Flying Harry.

Slowly and surely was the Flying Harry creeping up on its larger rival, but the little fellows ahead were still gaining. The six miles to the lower turning stake were covered in eight minutes. Here the small boats lost ground taking in their spinnakers. They, however, started on the return leg, with a lead of five hundred yards, the Snowflake being ahead.

As the Jack Frost and Harry approached the stake, they were side by side, the Frost being on the outside. Frank kept his boat as close to the mark as possible, and when clear of it, turned his boat quickly, and was off on the first tack before the Jack Frost could get around. In making this turn he had gained fifty yards.

In the beat up the river to the starting point, the large boats had a great advantage, and it could be seen that they would soon cut down the lead of the other boats. Frank was working like a beaver. Half of the

time the Flying Harry was rushing along with only two of her runners on the ice.

The Jack Frost was also doing good work; its skipper had learned a few lessons from Frank, and he was now taking more chances, but was gradually falling behind.

When this leg of the course was half covered, the Flying Harry had caught up with the Icicle and the Snowflake. Here Frank's trouble began. The skippers of these boats were watching him like hawks, no matter what he did, or how he manipulated his boat, one or the other was always in the way. When he would turn they also would turn. In this way they held him back, and the Jack Frost was gaining and would soon be up with them.

The spectators who lined the course watched this battle with great interest. They expected to see a collision at every turn that the boats made. Frank was growing desperate, and he at last determined to take a chance in crossing their bows.

In the long reach, on the tack that they were then on, he was well ahead. As he approached the bank of the river, he shot his boat across the bow of the Icicle, and he just managed to clear the bow of the Snowflake. The skipper of this boat in his effort to cut him off, had hung on to the course too long and was obliged to turn his boat quickly. As he did so, it skidded up on to the broken ice along the shore.

This mishap practically put the Snowflake out of the race, as by the time her owner had made repairs and was again under way, the other boats had rounded the mark. Frank now had a clear course in front of him,

and although the Jack Frost was only one hundred yards behind, he felt that the Flying Harry would maintain her lead in the race to the end.

The spectators at the starting line were aware that there had been an accident and they did not know who was to blame for it. They therefore were not as liberal with their applause as they might have been, had the four boats remained in the race.

Frank, however, received liberal applause for the graceful manner in which he rounded the mark. By the time the other two boats had worked their way around, the Flying Harry was a good half mile in the lead. The little Icicle, with her extra sail set, again succeeded in beating the Jack Frost to the lower mark. In the run to the finishing line, the Jack Frost beat the smaller boat by one mile. Here they found that the Flying Harry had won the race by crossing the line three minutes ahead of the second boat. Clinton, Frank and James received the congratulations of their friends and also from the owners of the other yachts.

The owner of the Snowflake said he had no protest to make. "I tried to hold back the Flying Harry, and prevent her taking the lead; my action was perfectly legitimate, but it resulted in my defeat and in running me out of the race, and no one is to blame but myself." All of the contestants were satisfied that the best boat had won, and they were loud in their praise of the skill displayed by Frank in sailing the boat.

This race was looked upon as a sort of preliminary one, or a tuning up for the regatta that was to be held on Washington's Birthday, when two prizes would be

awarded; one to the larger boats, or Class "A," and one to the smaller boats, or Class "B."

Mr. Ackerman announced that there were three more boats being built and would be finished in time to compete in the race. He said that he was interested in the largest of the three new boats, and had built her for the express purpose of beating the Flying Harry, and he was surely going to win out at the next trial. James replied that they would stand by their present boat. "You will find her somewhat improved," he said, "when we meet again, and if you whip us, you will certainly deserve great credit, but it is my opinion, that we will show you the way to the finishing line." Mr. Ackerman, James, Judge Terhune, and Mr. Knapp were to act as a committee of four, to make arrangements for the race.

As James separated from his fellow yachtsmen, a young man stepped up to him and presented his card. He proved to be the son of a wealthy brewer of Union Hill; his name was William Peterson. He said that he had often watched the ice boats on the river from the top story of his brewery, and he would like to own and sail one; he wanted to know if the Flying Harry was for sale.

This question was so unexpected that James was taken by surprise. At first he answered no, she was not for sale, but on second thought, as the young man was walking toward his horse and sleigh, it occurred to him that they would have but very little use for the boat after this season was over.

James hastened after the young man and overtook him as he was getting into his sleigh.

"I have reconsidered the answer that I gave you a few minutes ago," said James. "There might be a possibility of our selling the boat. Suppose you drive down to the Home Afloat next Monday, and I will then give you an answer. I will have to talk it over with others, who are interested in the boat with me." To this the young man agreed, and James suggested that he take a ride in the Flying Harry. "You can take my place on the boat when the boys start to go home, and I will drive your horse around to the Home Afloat and meet you there."

To this suggestion the young man readily agreed. They walked to where Frank and Clinton were standing talking to the girls, and the other ladies of their party. Here the young man was introduced, and his praise of the sailing qualities of the Flying Harry could not have fallen on the ears of a more enthusiastic or willing company.

James told Frank that this gentleman would take his place on the Harry, and to give him a good sail up and down the river and that he would explain when they were alone that evening.

It was growing late, and Mr. Knapp and Mr. Sanger were anxious to return to the city. The boys bid their sisters and friends good-bye and once again the Flying Harry got under headway.

James, however, was not to have his sleigh ride alone. Catching Fannie's eye, he pointed to the horse and sleigh that he was about to drive. This young lady was quick to grasp his meaning and before the others of the party were aware of it, she and James were driving down the road at a merry pace, with the

other sleighs following. When they reached that point in the road where they leave the main road to cross the meadow to the Home Afloat, James did not stop, but continued driving toward the town of New Durham.

The young man could not be blamed for not wanting to part quickly from the company he was then enjoying. At the foot of Union Hill he turned his horse's head toward home, and when he met the other sleighs, he transferred his fair passenger to her father's sleigh. After bidding them all good-bye, he drove to the Home Afloat, where he found the young brewer waiting impatiently for him.

After supper that evening, James told Frank and Clinton of the desire of Mr. Peterson to purchase the Flying Harry. He pointed out that they would have no use for the boat after the first of March, and as they all would be away from the place the following winter, he could see no reason why they should not sell the boat, on condition that they have the use of her up to the first of the month. "I would not agree to sell for less than one thousand dollars."

"If we can get that amount for her, it will pay us to sell, then if we find ourselves in a position where we should want another boat, we can build a better one."

Frank, at first, was loth to part with the boat, but when he had considered the proposition for a time, he concluded that James was right and both he and Clinton told him to go ahead and make the best deal he could. The result was that the Flying Harry changed ownership, the bill of sale being dated the

first day of March, on which day the boat was to be turned over to the new owner, Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Peterson paid five hundred dollars down to bind the bargain, the balance to be paid when the boat was turned over to him. It was also understood that he was to call at the Home Afloat with a friend, and Frank was to give them lessons in sailing the craft.

His desire to have the Flying Harry win the race that was to be held on the twenty-second of the month, was so great, that when Frank suggested that they equip the boat with a jib and spinnaker, he insisted upon going at once to the city to make the purchase.

He worked with Frank and Clinton in adjusting the new sails to the rigging, and when this was done, it was found that the sailing qualities and speed of the boat had been improved fully thirty-five per cent.

James had his hands full looking after the business interests of the Home Afloat, and what time he could spare from that, he devoted to the committee work, in conjunction with Mr. Ackerman, for it was upon these two that the work fell.

We will not go into the history of this race in detail, but give our readers an outline of it. The day was as pleasant a one as could be wished for with a fine sailing wind from out of the north. The crowd of people in attendance was fully twice as large as that which had witnessed the previous race.

The boats entered and contesting were as follows: Class "A"—The Flying Harry, Blizzard and Jack Frost. Class "B"—Snowflake, Icicle, Snowbird and North Wind.

Four prizes were given, one to the first and second boat in each class.

The crew of the Flying Harry consisted of Frank and Clinton in the rear seat, Will Barker on one of the the forward runners, Mr. Peterson on the other and his friend at the foot of the mast. Frank had given his crew ten days' hard training at handling the sails and during the race they proved to be the most expert of the six crews.

The sheet halyard of their boat was so arranged that it was taken care of by the man who occupied the seat behind the helmsman. This enabled Frank to give close attention to the wheel, and his voice, in giving orders, was the only one that was heard on the Harry during the entire race. The Flying Harry won the race, but the Blizzard proved to be a worthy antagonist.

The man at her helm was an expert from the Newburgh Ice Boat Club, and if he had been a little better acquainted with the course, he would have given Frank a close call for the honors. This boat finished second, a half minute behind the winner while the Jack Frost was two minutes behind the Blizzard. The Snowflake just managed to cross the line in front of the Snowbird; in fact, all four of the smaller or Class "B" boats were very evenly matched and the contest between them created more interest and excitement than the race between the larger boats.

After the race, Judge Terhune, in an appropriate speech, presented the prizes to the owners of the winning yachts, and the spectators voted the regatta a perfect success.



Many of the younger people remained on the river to enjoy the skating, while the others dispersed to their homes, or else took advantage of the fine sleighing.

When the first of the month was at hand, Mr. Peterson paid the balance of the money, and while the Flying Harry changed owners, it was left in the care of the people at the Home Afloat.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### DISPOSAL OF THE HOME AFLOAT, AND ENTERING : BUSINESS IN THE CITY

Mr. Knapp announced that he wanted Clinton to return to College by the first of April, and he had written the authorities at the College to that effect, at the same time stating that he would be accompanied by Frank, for whom he would be responsible.

He also said his family would return to their home in the country by the twentieth of the month, and Clinton must spend the remaining time with them in the city. This he did, and Frank was often at their house, the two boys getting such things ready as they thought they would require at college. After Clinton had left the Home Afloat, the two brothers had many a serious talk about their future, and in after life, Frank was heard to remark, on more than one occasion, that it was the promise James and he had made to each other, that influenced his conduct and life in college.

Frank had his share of money from the fishing business, and it was sufficient to fully equip him with his college outfit. Frank had two letters to write every week, one to Sadie, and the other to James. This he never neglected to do, and no matter in what part of the country James happened to be located, the letter would finally reach him.

Mr. Knapp would often run out to the college to see how the boys were getting along, and the reports he made to James were such that James felt he was being fully repaid for the sacrifices he was making in Frank's behalf. The letters he wrote to James, from time to

time also showed plainly that he was studying hard and gaining knowledge.

Both boys were popular with the other students, for they soon developed into athletes of no mean ability—Clinton as a runner, and Frank at baseball and rowing. They were also favorites with the faculty, because they were well up in their studies, and were known to be honorable and reliable. It took the two boys five years to complete the course, and at the end of that time they graduated with high honors.

Three weeks after the last boat race, the ice on the river showed signs of weakening and breaking up. A heavy rain had fallen, and the rays from old Sol were becoming stronger from day to day. Birds, that had been absent all winter, now began to make their appearance. The wild geese and ducks were also migrating to the North, and in a hundred different ways it could be seen that old Jack Frost was surely losing his grip, and was being slowly forced back toward the Arctic regions. All this told the boys that the time was fast approaching when they must give up their Home Afloat, Frank to enter college, and James to enter upon a commercial life.

The nets had been removed from the river and stored in the barn. Most of the traps had also been gathered up. The horse had been returned to Mr. Knapp, and when the first of April arrived, it found everything snugly stowed away.

Old Harry had been kept fully informed as to the change that was now taking place in the lives of his young friends. No step was taken without first consulting with the old darkey. He was offered a home at

Mr. Knapp's, or he could remain at the Home Afloat and become its owner. He chose the latter, and James persuaded him to enter into a partnership with Will Barker in the fishing and trapping business. This co-partnership lasted for seven years, and during that time James Hull would often visit his old friends.

It was James who kept their accounts, and straightened out any slight misunderstandings that had taken place. When a dispute would arise between them, they would always decide to leave it for James to settle.

Will Sisco remained at the Home Afloat with Old Harry. It was his death that broke up the partnership and caused the old darkey to leave the meadow and make his home with Mr. and Mrs. James Hull. When the old man died, a bank book, in which a will was found, showed that he had on deposit the sum of six thousand five hundred dollars. The will had been drawn up by a lawyer, and was witnessed by Mr. Knapp. The money he bequeathed to Miss Sadie Hull. This young lady saw that a fitting monument marked the spot where the old darkey was buried.

When the ice in the river had broken up, the wild ducks began to settle in the water, and the spring shooting season was open. Mr. Sanger and his friend were often at the Home Afloat, during the month of March, to enjoy the sport, and it was settled that James should enter into the employ of his firm on the first day of May. This gave him all the month of April to close up his affairs at the Home Afloat, and to prepare a temporary home in the city for himself and Sadie.

Sadie and Fannie found a floor in a private house that suited them. They found much pleasure and

enjoyment in furnishing it in a manner they thought would please James. A number of things were brought from the Home Afloat, such as pictures, books, clothing, tools, etc., etc. These were carefully stored away in a room set aside for that purpose. The furniture, crockery and cooking utensils were all new, and when James and Sadie moved into their new house, they only needed the presence of Frank to make them once more a united family.

On the first day of May, James Hull entered upon his new duties, and he applied to the work all the energy and thought that had been so characteristic of him in the past. He spent two months, May and June, at the factory, and during that time he learned all he could of the making up of the furs and skins. The months of July and August were spent in the salesrooms and store. He also obtained a list of the trappers and guides in the different localities that he expected to visit.

When the first of September arrived, he was prepared to start on his first visit to the North and Northwest, from which he was not to return until the following Christmas.

The house in the city was closed up and Sadie took up her abode with the Knapps.

James first visited the States in the Northwest bordering on the Great Lakes. Here he bought and shipped to his firm large quantities of skins. He travelled over the border, into the British Possessions, and through Canada, thence through Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and northern New York. He paid good prices for the skins he purchased direct from

the trappers and guides, and he obtained furs in all of the above territory; but what he considered of more importance were the acquaintances and connections that he had made. At every place he would set a time for his next visit, and he exacted promises from those with whom he dealt, that they would hold their skins until he had a chance to look them over. He even advanced money to those who had a reputation for honesty and fair dealing. The guides were most anxious to serve him, for he paid them well, and he gained their respect and confidence. He kept a diary, in which were registered the names of the guides and his promises to them. These promises James was always careful to fulfill to the letter.

When Christmas came it found him once more in the company of his sister, brother and friends.

His firm was well pleased with his work, and they were most anxious to have him start out again. He only remained at home two weeks, and at the end of that time he again started to cover the same territory that he had previously visited.

It was now in the depth of winter; snow covered the ground, and travelling was a great hardship. The news of his previous visit had been told to trappers and dealers who had not met him at that time, and they were on the lookout for his return. If his guide told him of a fine lot of furs, that he knew to be at some distant Indian village, guides and trappers were sent out to bring them in. Quite often he would accompany them, and on several occasions his life was in danger from the attacks of wolves, and by being caught in storms. James had expected these trials, and he was

well prepared for them. The demand upon his firm for ready cash was heavy, and it kept them busy making arrangements with the nearest banks, to meet his demands. Sometimes his paper would not be acceptable, and he would have to attend to having it cashed. He carried very little money with him. The funds would be deposited with the most responsible firm, or man at the outpost or village, and James would issue paper against it.

Night and day he worked, displaying a tireless energy that meant success. Furs and skins had begun to arrive in New York from his work on this trip, and bills of lading were being received by mail almost daily, showing the tonnage that was on its way. Word had also reached the firm of the risks that James was taking in order to secure the furs.

Several letters had been received from dealers at the outposts, who considered that James was intruding upon their rights. These letters were somewhat threatening in tone, and it made the firm apprehensive for his welfare.

During the first week in February, a tall, raw-boned man, standing six feet three inches high, and having the appearance of being a backwoodsman, entered the store. As was the yearly custom of a number of like characters, he had come from the State of Maine, and had brought with him several bales of fine furs. He was conducted to the private office, and in half an hour he left the building in a great hurry, not even stopping to look after his bales.

This man would have attracted attention anywhere, on account of his great height and herculean frame.



His dress and manner denoted that of the frontiersman. He made his way to a gun store, where he purchased a brace of Colt's revolvers, a rifle, belt and ammunition. From there he took a stage that carried him to the railroad depot at Thirty-third Street and Tenth Avenue, where he boarded a train for the West.

He had been sent out to act as a body guard to James, and he carried a letter of introduction, which he handed to him when they met, at a trading post, a few weeks later, on the shore of Lake Superior. The man's name was Silas Cobb. He was known on the Western frontier and in his native State as Big Si. His reputation as a dead shot, a truthful, honest and reliable man, was second to none.

The Indians knew him as a good friend, but a bad enemy. Six years of his life had been spent in the employ of the Government as a scout. During the past year he had remained at home, but the wild Western border life had a fascination for him that he could not resist. When the firm of Sanger & Chapin told him what they wanted of him, he quickly accepted their offer, declaring at the same time that he would take care of the youngster.

James found the services of this man invaluable. His knowledge of fur, of the woods, and of border life in general, was such that it enabled James to accomplish many valuable deals and trades that otherwise he would have found impossible. He seemed to scent danger, and knew the best way to handle it or avoid it. On more than one occasion his forethought, intuition or action, had saved James' life, as well as his own.

We cannot give you, dear reader, in this work, a

detailed description of the incidents that occurred during the four years of life that James Hull spent with this man, in the vocation which he had chosen, as that of itself would fill a volume much larger than this, and possibly be more interesting.

We will therefore proceed to the time when James returned to New York from his second successful trip. Here he found that the firm had been compelled to add a wholesale department to their business. This was necessitated by the large number of skins that had been sent in from the far North.

It was now the first of May, and James had demanded and was to receive five thousand dollars for his next year's work. The firm willingly paid this amount. They had made a large amount of money out of the additional furs that he had obtained for them, and they knew that he would be still more successful on his future trips.

James and Si Cobb had become firm friends. He and Sadie had visited his people in Maine, during the vacation period, and this had kept them in each other's company almost the whole of the year.

Each trip they made after furs would find this pair penetrating farther and farther into the wilds of the West and the North, and at the end of four years the wholesale fur firm of Sanger, Chapin & Hull was formed.

The old firm had found that James was an indispensable part of their business, and it resulted in his being given a one-third interest in the new firm.

One year after the formation of this firm, a very important and interesting event happened. It was the

marriage of Miss Fannie Knapp to Mr. James Hull. The ceremony took place at the residence of the bride's parents. Sadie Hull acted as bridesmaid, and Clinton Knapp was the groomsman. The event did not surprise anyone, as it had been understood for a whole year that it was likely to take place at any time.

Frank and Clinton had graduated and were home from College. Frank took up the work that James was forced to relinquish. He and Silas Cobb made as daring a pair of fur seekers as ever visited an Indian village, and the supply of furs shipped to the New York house was fully maintained. Clinton Knapp entered the employ of the new firm, his duties being that of sales manager. He finally became smitten by the charms of the only daughter and child of the senior member of the firm, Miss Minnie Sanger, and their marriage was a notable event in New York society.

One year after their marriage, Mr. Sanger retired from active business life, and by giving his interest to his son-in-law he necessitated a change in the firm name. Mr. Chapin also retired at the same time, and for many years the sign of the furrier firm of "Hull Bros. & Knapp" was a fixture on Broadway, where we hope it still remains. Frank Hull met his life partner in the West, a vivacious, refined school-teacher, who accompanied him on his trips in quest of furs for several years after their marriage.

Sadie Hull made the acquaintance of a young clergyman, who declared even unto this day, that Sadie was born to become his wife, which she did.

THE END.





















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